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Statement

by

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at

**HLPF – SDGs in focus
SDG 15 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Life on Land
Interactive panel discussion**

Monday, 11 July 2022, 9:10 AM- 12:00 PM

{Guiding question: Keeping in mind the deep shifts necessary to make concrete progress on SDG15, what key actions would you say are crucial to activate a system-wide shift to better represent nature's value in economic decision making and make progress toward a nature-based economy? In your view, what are some of the best practices and lessons in this respect?}

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Both globally and regionally, progress on SDG15 is mixed at best.

In the UNECE region, there is no evidence of a positive trend in the status of ecosystems, though forest area is increasing. Only a minority of habitats have a good conservation status.

The protected area estate has almost tripled over the past 30 years, but overall biodiversity loss continues.

In addition, green spaces for sustainable climate-resilient cities are still fragmented.

Other regions face serious challenges as well:

In Western Asia, land degradation and biodiversity loss, accelerated by climate change and conflict, are weakening ecosystems and the resilience of poor communities who depend on them for their livelihoods.

Transboundary risks such as sand and dust storms are increasing.

In Africa, the mobilization of funding by Governments and partners to scale up the sustainable management of land, forests and biodiversity remains a challenge.

Only one target of SDG15 is likely to be achieved in Asia and the Pacific.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the lack of systemic policies aimed at halting biodiversity degradation and loss, while simultaneously addressing poverty and marginalization, is one of the main obstacles to achieving sustainable development.

These trends and challenges need an adequate and urgent response to get us on track.

We in the five Regional Commissions are unequivocal that there's a need for a transformative and structural, whole-of-government and whole-of-society change, through a big environmental push.

This will require a substantial overhaul of financial and regulatory policies.

Governments should create the financial conditions for resolute ecosystem restoration by accelerating the use of regional and global funds, crafting national financial instruments and ensuring public expenditures are aligned with SDG15.

Innovative sources of finance should be developed, such as the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility designed by the Economic Commission for Africa and partners.

Governments should also eliminate or reform subsidies and incentives for products and activities that lead to biodiversity loss.

Instead, they should develop effective positive incentives to mainstream biodiversity conservation across sectors and policies.

Debt swaps for sustainability, green and blue bonds and carbon credits must be put to work.

The protection of ecosystems must be ramped up, with a shift to nature-based solutions and nature-positive, regenerative and resilient systems, while addressing interlinkages and ensuring inclusivity.

Areas with natural quality, supported by protected areas, must be regulated to ensure functional biodiversity.

In particular, we see that sustainable forest management and the restoration of forest landscapes at scale are vital for achieving SDG15.

Finally, understanding links between natural resources and product markets is fundamental for a just transition to a nature-based economy, with an important role for the private sector.

At the same time, there needs to be greater focus on the environment-health nexus and supporting stakeholder engagement and awareness.

In conclusion, we have the knowledge, and we have established instruments for international cooperation and tested tools on the national level.

We know what needs to be done, but it also takes determination to do it.

Thank you.

{additional, optional points, if asked for more}

Other solutions include the development of national ecosystem accounts and reorientating policies, investments, regulations and even tax regimes to address deep inequalities and to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. Such an approach can also enhance productivity, stability and resilience of social, economic and production systems.

Within the Europe and Central Asia Region we have an Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change that brings together 18 UN agencies to provide common support to programme countries and UN Country Teams. In 2022, the Coalition is focusing on the triple planetary crises, including biodiversity loss, as well as the green transition.
