

**Input for the 2025 High-level Political Forum
Committee on Forestry (COFO)**

Your assessment of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17.

The Committee on Forestry (COFO) noted pressures and crises such as climate-related stressors, land and water degradation, biodiversity loss, and increasing wildfire frequencies. Approximately 420 million hectares of forest were lost to deforestation from 1990 to 2020 while the global trade of wood and paper products dropped by 12 percent in 2023, with exports decreasing by USD 64 billion to USD 482 billion. These trends underscore the impacts of climate change alongside gaps in economic and social structures that impact the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). COFO recognized the need for cost-effective and equitable innovative solutions that can be implemented rapidly and at scale to address these crises, optimizing the benefits forests provide for agrifood systems, protecting biodiversity and improving resilience. COFO highlighted various ways to implement a wide range forest-sector innovations to empower people to apply to solve problems and scale up impacts and highlighted five enabling actions that will help scale up responsible and inclusive innovation in the forest sector: (1) raise awareness; (2) boost innovation skills, capabilities and knowledge; (3) encourage transformational partnerships; (4) ensure more and universally accessible finance for innovation; and (5) provide an incentivizing policy and regulatory environment.

COFO recommended developing capacity-building programmes and tools, providing technical assistance and supporting the development of sustainable forest-based bioeconomy approaches and ecosystem restoration to improve livelihoods.

Three key areas where sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

First, forest data and monitoring. FAO consistently reports on forest-related SDG indicators and has developed innovative tools to enhance the availability of quality forest data, statistics and analytics. These include The Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2025, The FRA 2020 Remote Sensing Survey and the online FRA Platform. FAO has expanded technical support for national forest monitoring through Open Foris, SEPAL, and the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) to inform national decisions, enable countries meet international forest commitments and track progress toward the SDGs.

Secondly, restoration. The Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring (FERM) consists of a geospatial platform and a registry of restoration initiatives. It is the official monitoring platform for

tracking global progress and disseminating good practices for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. It also supports countries in reporting areas under restoration for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 2.

Thirdly, FAO considers impactful partnerships essential for achieving the SDGs. The Committee on Forestry collaborates with the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) to strengthen agriculture and forestry linkages. The joint initiatives of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) contribute directly to achieving SDGs and the Global Forest Goals (GFGs) while aligning with broader global development frameworks. The FAO Green Cities Initiative through the FAO Green Cities Network is expanding a global community of practice and aims to improve the resilience of 1000 cities globally by 2030.

Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.

Firstly, scaling up actions on agriculture and forestry linkages can strengthen food security, halt deforestation and biodiversity loss, and improve livelihoods. COFO supports three priority areas for scaling up agriculture-forestry linkages: i) promoting agroforestry as a sustainable production system; ii) improving agroforestry monitoring methodologies and tools; iii) supporting national agroforestry policy and strategy development.

Secondly, responsible, sustainable and inclusive innovations for forests are essential for optimizing forest-based actions by countries to address global challenges within their national contexts and capacities. The adoption of innovative and appropriate technologies and communication tools is also encouraged to support women's empowerment and inclusive forest management.

Thirdly, building the capacities of countries and stakeholders for transparent, accurate and cost-effective data integration is key to supporting decision-making and international reporting. FRA 2025 will examine the status of, and trends in, more than 60 forest-related variables in 236 countries and territories in the period 1990–2025.

Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

COFO endorsed the FAO Forestry Roadmap - From Vision to Action 2024-2031 which guides FAO's work in forestry to meet SDGs and other forestry-related goals and targets and address major global challenges, setting out 3 objectives, namely: i) Conserve and restore forest ecosystems to ensure life on land and support resilient agrifood systems; ii) Enhance sustainable production and build

sustainable and resilient livelihoods, value chains and bioeconomy; iii) Scale up science- and evidence-based innovation to increase the forest sector's contributions to global solutions and accelerate sustainable agrifood systems transformation.

The FAO flagship publication State of the World's Forests 2024 (SOFO 2024) highlighted diverse ways in which forest-sector innovation can drive positive change, with case studies on forest conservation, restoration, and sustainable use.

Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF.

COFO recommends that the HLPF consider recognizing the significant potential of forests to contribute to the implementation of SDGs. Forests are crucial for addressing pressing global challenges such as hunger, food security, biodiversity loss and climate change. This can be achieved by promoting inclusive innovations relevant to forests, strengthening agriculture-forestry linkages, enhancing forest data, providing normative guidance, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives, and responding to the needs of countries.