



**25th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry
(virtual meeting, 5-9 October 2020)**

**Opening Statement and Statement of the European Union and its 27
Member States on Agenda item 4.1 State of the World's Forests
2020: Forests, biodiversity and people**

Madam/Mr Chair,

1. Germany is honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States at this 25th COFO session.
2. First of all, we would like to express our appreciation to the Steering Committee and the Secretariat for their good work in preparing the 25th Session of COFO under very challenging and continuing COVID-19 conditions.
3. We welcome the FAO's long-term commitment to sustainable forest management as well as all efforts taken to promote its implementation and regularly monitor, assess and report on the state of global forests. In particular, the important role of forests in implementing the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will be highlighted at this session. In this respect we wish to underline the importance of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests and the important role of FAO as chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.
4. We are obliged to say that we are not fully convinced of the written procedure foreseen for Item 8 and most of Item 9 at this session because we believe that due to the extreme time pressure not all delegations had a chance to submit on time their valuable contributions. An important item such as the Progress in implementing the UN Strategic Plan for Forests would in our view deserve more time for discussion and exchange between the members of the Committee.
5. Nonetheless, overall we are looking forward to discussing at this session the important contributions of forests to various SDGs, including to food security and to preserve our global biodiversity. The report "State of the World's Forests 2020: Forests, biodiversity and people" offers an excellent base for our discussion on that matter.

Statement 4.1

6. The EU and its Member States welcome the publication of The State of the World's Forests 2020 (SOFO 2020), focused on the contributions of forests and people who are dependent of them and those who use and manage them to the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity. We consider this document as an excellent basis for next steps.
7. We support the key findings of SOFO 2020 and we request FAO to disseminate and promote them in appropriate fora, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as in other forest-relevant processes. We also invite other member countries to ensure that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework take the key findings contained in SOFO 2020 into consideration.
8. We note with concern that deforestation, mainly caused by agriculture expansion, and forest degradation and fragmentation, mainly caused by unsustainable logging, fuelwood harvesting and livestock grazing, continue taking place at alarming rates, being a significant cause of biodiversity loss. Furthermore, we underline that natural disturbances, such as wildfires, which have been exacerbated by climate change, are significant drivers of forest degradation and the associated biodiversity loss as well.
9. We encourage FAO to contribute to raise awareness on the main direct and indirect drivers of forest biodiversity loss and how to address them, and, in this regard, stress the role of sustainable forest management in biodiversity conservation, restoration and sustainable use.
10. We also underline the crucial importance of sustainable forest management, including protected areas, as a holistic approach that ensures biodiversity conservation and restoration, while meeting the demands for resources that support livelihoods, not only in rural areas but also in urban and peri-urban ones. We request FAO to strengthen its work on SFM and to continue to demonstrate that solutions which balance conservation and restoration with the sustainable use of forest biodiversity are possible and essential and call on FAO to demonstrate those positive enspiring experiences, including through sharing best practices.
11. The EU stresses the importance of clear definitions and harmonised and reliable data as a sound basis for decision-making. We encourage FAO to further strengthen its role as a coordinator of forest-related data reporting at global level and increase efforts to fill those data gaps detected in SOFO 2020.

Thank you, Madam/Mr Chair.