

Australia's Intervention: COFO26

Item 9.1 – FAO's work in Forestry under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31

Australia welcomes the achievements of FAO's work in forestry over the 2020-21 biennium and we again express our support for the Strategic Framework 2022-31 – a document which necessarily sets an ambitious agenda to achieve Agenda 2030. We highlight that forestry must be an integral part of this ambition, not only to achieve SDG 15, but to achieve many of the SDG targets including those which have been clearly outlined under the FAO's Programme Priority Areas.

However, as we highlighted in our intervention for Item 4 on SOFO22, the path ahead is challenging. The world is currently facing a suite of unprecedented challenges stemming from, among other things, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the increasing cost of living, and conflicts.

On the issue of conflicts, we take this opportunity to reiterate our condemnation of Russia's unprovoked, unjust and illegal invasion of Ukraine. Chair, we also take this opportunity to respectfully respond to the claims made by the Russian Federation under Item 4 through which they sought to inaccurately portray Australia as a significant contributor to deforestation. In this regard, we highlight the strong efforts by the Australian Government and the private sector which resulted in Australia recording the second largest increase in forest area of any nation in the previous decade, adding 4.4 million hectares of mostly native forest, as reflected in FRA2020. This year's Montreal Process Synthesis Report predicted Australia's forest extent to continue to increase in coming years due to the regulatory settings that we have in place. Australia is sympathetic that addressing deforestation is a challenging issue. We would be more than happy to share concrete examples of the efforts that contributed to our recent success with any Member who may have an interest.

In closing, Australia welcomes the reinvigorated business model outlined in Paper 7.1, and we look forward to an ongoing focus by the FAO on agility, inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness to Member's needs. We also look forward to the FAO continuing to strive for optimal cross-sectoral collaboration under which forestry is core tenet.

Thank you.