

Opening Statement at the COFO26 of FAO

by Mr. Liu Dongsheng, Vice Administrator

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Distinguished Director-General Mr. Qu Dongyu,

Distinguished Chair Mr. Hargrove,

Ladies, gentlemen and friends,

Good morning!

Today, it is my great pleasure to be in Rome with you in person for the 26th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry. I would like to send my warmest congratulations to the convening of this event on behalf of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration of China. I would also like to express my sincere greetings to all the colleagues present, and my heartfelt thanks to all the friends who give concerns and supports to the forestry and grassland development in China!

The world today is marked by the intertwining between the changes unseen in a century and the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has been ushered in a new period of turbulence and transformation. Under the background that global threats and challenges have never ceased to emerge, how to accomplish a green recovery from the pandemic has become an urgent issue to be concerned with. Recalling the COFO25 in 2020, which was held online, the participants overcame the adverse impacts of the pandemic and dedicated their wisdom and strengths to the global issues related to forestry development and governance, especially how forests and forestry can support the green recovery from the pandemic.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to forest and grassland development as well as ecological civilization. President Xi Jinping participates in the voluntary tree-planting event every year. He stresses that forests are the sources of water, grains, assets and carbon sinks, and the protection and high-quality development of forests and grasslands will help create favourable ecological environment for humans and other creatures. Under the guidance of Xi Jinping's thoughts on ecological civilization, the forestry and grassland authorities and practitioners adhere to the concept that lucid waters and lush mountains

are invaluable assets in their advancing the science-based large-scale land greening, and adopt a holistic approach to protecting and restoring mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grassland and deserts. A number of large-scale ecological restoration programs including Nature Forest Protection Program, Green for Grain Program and Three-North Shelterbelt Program have been successfully implemented, and the quality of forests much improved. The forest chief scheme has been fully and firmly pushed into practices nationwide. There are nearly 1.2 million forest chiefs at the levels of province, prefecture, county, town and village, among which there are 421 provincial-level cadres. A forest-grassland ecological network perception system is now available for "one system", "one set of data" and "one map" used to monitor, evaluate and manage forest and grassland resources. The damage rates of forest and grassland fires stabilize below 0.9‰and 3‰, respectively.

According to the latest statistics, there are 230 million hectares of forests in China. The forest coverage rate rose to 24.02%, and the growing stock volume 19.49 billion cubic meters, while the preservation area of planted forests tops the worlds to be 87 million hectare. Both the forest area and the growing stock volume have maintained consecutive years of growth. The total carbon storage in forest and grassland is now 11.44 billion tons. The Chinese Government has made constant efforts to promote the conservation of protected areas with national parks as the priority, placing 90% of vegetation types and terrestrial ecosystems, 65% of higher plant communities, and 85% of key protected wildlife populations under effective protection, and established the first batch of five national parks to protect critical wildlife like giant pandas. We have taken proactive actions to combat illegal trade in wildlife and illegal logging, and pushed ahead the sustainable forest management by actively exploring the ways towards ecological civilization and forestry-related economic development against the backdrop of the pandemic. We have increased our efforts to prevent and control desertification. As the result, the desertification control actions have been taken on 18.5 million hectares of land, the 1.77 million ha of sandy land conserved from any use, and the zero-growth goal of land degradation by 2030 achieved ahead of schedule, which make the desertified area and sandy land shrink. We have fully tapped the forest and grassland resources, boost the development of oil-tea and specialty nut industries, and recruit poor people to be ecological forest rangers, with a view to achieving poverty alleviation and

rural revitalization. In 2021, the total output of China's forestry sector hit over 1.2 trillion US dollars, creating jobs and increasing incomes for over 30 million farmers. Through our unremitting efforts, we have made our own contribution to global poverty eradication, climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation.

The Chinese government is committed to strengthening international cooperation in the field of forestry and grasslands, and assisting in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. Up to now, we have signed 14 inter-governmental cooperation agreements in the field of forestry and grassland with 8 countries, and 95 inter-departmental cooperation agreements with 59 countries. China benefits from international cooperation, and also offers our wisdom and solutions to the world.

Ladies, gentlemen and friends,

The world, as a global village with a shared destiny, is now challenged by a series of ecological crisis such as climate warming, extreme weather, land desertification, and biodiversity loss. This is the case with China, whose forest resources are insufficient in volume, unevenly in distribution and poor in quality, and where over 30% of its land area is occupied by sandy and desertified land. Hence, the ecological civilization in China still has a long way to go. China will continue to devote itself to the international exchange and cooperation in forestry and grassland to accelerate information sharing, experience sharing and mutual learning in terms of ecological amelioration, resource conservation, desertification control, forest management, forest-grassland carbon sequestration and industrial development, and make a due contribution to building a global village which is ecologically good.

Ladies, gentlemen and friends,

At the High-level Dialogue on Global Development held in June this year, the Chinese Government launched the "Bamboo as A Substitute for Plastic" Initiative with the INBAR, and jointly established a "Global Sustainable Forest Management Network". This provides a Chinese solution to global post-pandemic green recovery, ecosystem conservation and climate change. China has the willingness to collaborate with all the countries around the world and help each other in the same boat, and save

no endeavors to build a community of shared life and promote the harmonious coexistence of man and nature.

At the end, I wish this event a complete success!

Thank you!