

**Statement by Dr. Abbasali Nobakht**  
**Deputy Minister of Agriculture-Jahad and Head of Natural Resources & Watershed**  
**Management Organization (NRWO)**  
**I.R. of IRAN**  
**On the occasion of**  
**26th session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO-26)**  
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**Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Italian government for hosting the 26th session of the Committee on Forestry in Rome, and express my sincere gratitude to the Secretariat of the FAO Forestry Committee, and especially to Mr. QU Dongyu, Director General of the FAO, for organizing this event.

With a land area of 165 million hectares, Iran is the 17th largest country in the world. About 14 million hectares of the countries' area is covered with natural forests. Most of the country is located in the arid and desert climate and suffers from limitations and fragile ecosystem. However, due to her special characteristics in terms of geography and physiography, the country is quite rich in ecological diversity.

The Hyrcanian forests in the northern part of Iran with an area of about 2 million hectares belonging to the Tertiary Period and the remnant of the Ice Age are known as the mother of Europe's broadleaf forests, thus have values, and deserve to be recognized as worlds' natural heritage. Intact parts of this habitat with an area of over 300 000 hectares, registered as a world natural heritage site in 2018 by the UNESCO General Assembly.

**Distinguished Participants,**

Islamic Republic of Iran, is committed to environmental conventions including UNFCCC<sup>1</sup>, CBD<sup>2</sup>, UNCCD<sup>3</sup> and UNFF<sup>4</sup>, has made every effort to protect and conserve the country's forests. In this connection, I should stress on Iran's rather ambitious initiative that has banned the industrial exploitation of the Hyrcanian forests (known as Forest Rest Plan) with an ecological approach, paying due attention to the vital aspects of these forests' ecosystem services, especially from water supply, soil conservation, ecotourism, biodiversity and sustainable development indicators' point of view.

Iran plans to take a concrete step to mitigate climate change effects by planting one billion trees in four years.

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<sup>1</sup> UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

<sup>2</sup> CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

<sup>3</sup> UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

<sup>4</sup> UNFF: United Nations Forum on Forests

In conclusion, Islamic Republic of Iran, in this framework, is ready to cooperate with the countries of the region, and FAO, in the field of natural resources and watershed management, to mitigate land degradation and dust-storms.

We welcome any regional initiative to formulate a strategy and road map to overcome the current problem and agree on an action plan in order to achieve sustainable management of forests.

Thank You Very Much indeed