Statement of the International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA)

28th Session of the Committee on Forestry and 10th World Forestry Week

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Agenda item 4 (Verbal):

State of the World's Forests 2026: Restoring forests and landscapes - the way forward for a sustainable future

Thank you, Chair. Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the International Forestry Students' Association.

IFSA welcomes the launch of the State of the World's Forests 2026 and its focus on forest and landscape restoration as a response to the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and food insecurity.

As young people, we are deeply concerned about the continued degradation of forests and landscapes, which threatens ecosystems, livelihoods and the well-being of present and future generations.

Through consultations across the six Regional Forestry Commission regions, young people shared their experiences, concerns and priorities for forest and landscape restoration, including community-based monitoring in Africa, restoration activities in the Andes and field experiences in North America.

However, young people continue to face barriers to meaningful participation in restoration planning, implementation and monitoring, including limited access to finance, technical training and professional opportunities.

Drawing on these experiences, IFSA wishes to highlight three priorities for the Committee's consideration.

First, youth are already contributing to the restoration agenda through their knowledge, skills and innovative approaches. We encourage Members to strengthen opportunities for youth participation throughout the restoration process, supported by practical training, mentorship and opportunities for decent work, recognizing youth in all their diversity.

Second, youth-generated observations can support restoration monitoring and assessment when supported by appropriate technical training, access to equipment and connectivity, and

established processes for supervision and data validation. Partnerships with national forest-monitoring institutions and academia can strengthen these contributions.

Third, to be sustainable, restoration activities must be designed to support the long-term recovery of the ecological, social and economic functions of forests. The involvement and resourcing of young practitioners and entrepreneurs can help sustain locally grounded restoration initiatives beyond short project cycles.

Our consultations reinforce one central message: young people are already contributing to restoration, and their sustained engagement can help turn restoration commitments into lasting results.

Thank you, Chair.