

MINISTERS' REMARKS ON THE OPENING OF 28TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY (COFO)

26 September–3 October 2026

**Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of
the United Nations,
Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great honour to join you at the opening of the 28th Session of the Committee on Forestry. On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Zimbabwe, I extend our appreciation to the Food and Agriculture Organization for convening this important global forum.

Zimbabwe recognises COFO as a vital platform for international cooperation, policy dialogue and practical action on the sustainable management of forests. Its work is especially significant at a time when climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and growing pressure on natural resources demand solutions that are integrated, inclusive and firmly grounded in local realities.

For Zimbabwe, forests and wildlife are inseparable parts of our natural heritage, our economy and the livelihoods of our people. We remain committed to protecting these resources through sound science, effective law enforcement, restoration of degraded landscapes and partnerships that balance conservation with sustainable development.

Our position is clear; conservation must bring tangible and equitable benefits to the communities who live alongside forests and wildlife and who bear the costs of conserving them. Communities must not be treated

merely as beneficiaries. They should be recognised as rights holders and active partners, with meaningful rights of access, participation and management, supported by transparent and accountable benefit-sharing arrangements.

Zimbabwe will continue to strengthen community-based natural resource management, promote sustainable forest-based and wildlife-based livelihoods, and support local institutions to make informed decisions over the resources on which they depend. We believe that when communities have secure rights, a genuine voice and a fair share of benefits, they become the strongest custodians of biodiversity.

This session offers an opportunity to deepen cooperation, share experience and advance financing, technology and capacity-building for sustainable forestry. Zimbabwe stands ready to work with FAO, Member States and all partners to translate our shared commitments into lasting outcomes for people, forests and wildlife.

I wish the 28th Session of COFO productive deliberations and every success.

I thank you.