

28th Session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO28)
28 September – 2 October 2026

Agenda Item 4: State of the World's Forests 2026: Restoring forests and landscapes – the way forward for a sustainable future

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE ASIA REGIONAL GROUP

Thank you, Chair,

India as chair of Asia Regional Group has the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Asia Group.

The Asia Group welcomes the *State of the World's Forests 2026* and appreciates FAO's efforts in highlighting forest and landscape restoration as an important contribution to sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and sustainable development.

The Group recognizes the diversity of forest ecosystems, landscapes, national circumstances, capacities and development priorities across the Asia region. We therefore emphasize that forest and landscape restoration should remain country-driven, context-specific and responsive to national priorities, while taking into account the ecological, social and economic conditions of each country.

The Asia Group supports the report's call to move from restoration commitments towards effective and lasting implementation. We acknowledge the progress made in restoration efforts globally, while recognizing that further efforts are needed to translate commitments into meaningful and lasting outcomes on the ground.

While quantitative targets remain important for tracking progress, restoration success should not be measured by the number of trees planted or hectares restored alone. Greater attention should also be given to the quality, resilience and long-term ecological and socioeconomic benefits of restoration. In this regard, we welcome the report's emphasis on long-term and high-quality restoration.

The Group highlights the importance of conserving biodiversity, using appropriate and locally adapted species, strengthening landscape and ecosystem resilience, and promoting the meaningful participation of local communities and forest-dependent populations. Local knowledge, experience and participation can make an important contribution to ensuring that restoration efforts are relevant, practical and sustainable over time.

The Asia Group also recognizes that countries face different challenges in implementing restoration. Sufficient and accessible financing, capacity development, appropriate technology and innovation, quality planting materials, as well as reliable monitoring and information systems, are important in enabling countries to implement and sustain restoration efforts. These elements are particularly important as countries move from planning and commitments towards implementation on the ground.

In this regard, we encourage FAO to continue supporting Members, upon request, through technical assistance, capacity development, resource mobilization, knowledge-sharing and the development of practical approaches to strengthen restoration planning, implementation and monitoring. We also encourage continued efforts to facilitate access to relevant knowledge, tools and good practices that can be adapted to different national and local circumstances.

The Group recognizes that effective monitoring is important not only for reporting progress, but also for supporting better planning and decision-making. Monitoring approaches should therefore be practical, accessible and responsive to national capacities, while helping countries better understand the ecological and socioeconomic outcomes of their restoration efforts. SOFO itself recognizes differences in definitions, reporting methods and coverage across existing restoration platforms.

The Asia Group further recognizes the value of regional cooperation in advancing restoration. Existing regional mechanisms and partnerships can provide useful platforms for exchanging experiences, sharing lessons and good practices,

strengthening technical cooperation and building capacity across the region. We encourage FAO to continue facilitating such exchanges and supporting practical collaboration among countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Finally, the Asia Group emphasizes that forest and landscape restoration should go hand in hand with efforts to conserve and sustainably manage existing forests and to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Protecting healthy forests and restoring degraded landscapes are complementary efforts, both of which are essential for conserving biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem services and strengthening the resilience of forest landscapes.

The Asia Group remains committed to working closely with FAO and relevant partners to translate restoration commitments into practical, inclusive and sustainable action, while supporting meaningful and lasting restoration outcomes across the region.

Thank you, Chair.