

Thank you Chair and thank you to all those involved in the organisation of this week's session.

Australia congratulates the FAO on the 2026 edition of the State of the World's Forests report and its focus on restoring forests and landscapes. We support the suggested actions before the Committee.

Australia recognises that forest and landscape restoration has an important role to play in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and food insecurity. We support restoration approaches that are grounded in sustainable forest management, responsive to local conditions and designed to deliver long-term environmental, social and economic outcomes.

Australia also welcomes continued improvements in global forest monitoring and reporting through the Global Forest Resources Assessment process. We were pleased to see in FRA2025 that Australia ranked seventh globally for total forest area and fifth globally for net gain in forest area over the period 2015-2025, recording an average annual net increase of around 105 000 hectares. Australia's forest area has increased year on year since 2008, reflecting strong efforts by both the Australian Government and the private sector, especially in agricultural landscapes.

The Australia's State of the Forests Report Synthesis 2023 presents a summary of the best-available data for Australia's 44 indicators of sustainable forest management. Australia's State of the Forests Report has moved to an online-first reporting model, providing progressive updates of sustainable forest management indicators as new data becomes available and supporting evidence-based decision-making across Australia's forest sector.

Australia recognises the important role of Indigenous Peoples, and communities as long-term stewards of forest landscapes. In 2023, Australia's Indigenous forest estate comprised 79.9 million hectares of forest, representing around 60 per cent of Australia's total forest area. We welcome the Report's emphasis on people-centred approaches to restoration and recognise the valuable contribution of Indigenous knowledge and land management practices to healthy and resilient landscapes.

Australia also notes that restoration must be considered alongside growing global demand for forest products, renewable materials and ecosystem services. We consider restoration, conservation and sustainable production to be complementary objectives. Long-term success will depend on maintaining healthy forests while ensuring sustainable supplies of timber and fibre to meet future needs.

Australia recognises that sustainably managed planted forests have an important role in helping meet growing demand for timber and fibre. When established in appropriate

locations and managed sustainably, they can contribute to long-term fibre supply while helping reduce pressure on natural forests and supporting broader sustainable forest management outcomes.

In this regard, the Australian Government continues to support the sustainable growth of the forestry sector through approximately \$600 million initiatives, including plantation establishment, processing innovation, workforce capability, and research and development. These investments are helping to secure future timber and fibre supply while supporting regional communities and ecologically sustainable forest management.

Australia welcomes the progress made under the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and supports FAO's continued role in assisting Members, upon request and subject to available resources, through knowledge exchange, capacity building, technical cooperation and support for restoration implementation.