

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

- Slovakia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ireland on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.
- A clear paradigm shift from reactive suppression towards proactive, landscape-level prevention is necessary to build long-term resilience against wildfires. In this regard, we stress the need for holistic approach that addresses all four phases of the cycle – preparedness, prevention, reaction, and recovery. Landscape approaches are essential to effectively address wildfire risks.
- Resilient forests and healthy ecosystems contribute to the resilience of the landscape as a whole. Improving resilience and ecological stability of forests is the way to prevent wildfires and their consequences. Sustainable forest management plays an essential role in this context.
- Sustainable and close-to-nature forest management, forest adaptation, and increasing resilience to climate change are therefore the priorities for Slovakia. Close-to-nature forest management, as an integral part of sustainable forest management, has a potential to contribute to create forests that are well adapted and resilient to threats accelerated by climate change, including wildfires. Moreover, it also has a potential to improve water retention function of forests and regulation of water cycles which contributes to wildfire prevention as well.
- We would like to stress the work done so far at a regional level, in Europe, by mechanisms such as FoRISK. Strengthening coordination mechanisms and enhancing knowledge exchange are central to the evolving approach of integrated fire management.
- Therefore, it is important to continue efforts to strengthen inclusive regional dialogue and collaboration. We emphasise the importance and contribution of FAO Regional Forestry Commissions in those efforts. The cooperation with other regional partners is essential as well. Considering the need for landscape and integrative approaches, the contribution of Regional Forestry Commissions to FAO Regional Conferences on this topic should also be promoted.
- I thank you.