

COFO 28 – statements of the EU and its Member States

Agenda item 8: Green Cities Initiative

1. Madame/ Mr. Chair, Ireland is honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States at this 28th COFO session.
2. The European Union and its Member States thank FAO for the substantial progress achieved in implementing the Green Cities Initiative since COFO 27. We particularly welcome the expansion of the Green Cities Network, the strengthening of normative guidance, the enhanced collaboration with partners such as UN-Habitat, and the growing support provided to cities and countries through technical assistance, capacity development and policy dialogue.
3. We strongly support FAO's integrated approach, which strategically combines urban and peri-urban forestry, urban agriculture, and sustainable bioeconomy approaches. As cities continue to grow, these approaches are increasingly essential for improving climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. While acknowledging the potential for devastating urban fires, these forests can play an important role in disaster risk reduction, improving food security, and public health and well-being. They can also have a beneficial impact on lowering energy demand, and strengthening livelihoods and sustainable urban agrifood systems.
4. Even though these ecosystemic benefits are widely acknowledged, we invite FAO to also consider the potential role of urban and peri-urban forest in wildfire outbreaks during periods of extreme heat. We encourage FAO to integrate fire risk considerations into decisions regarding how, where and which species are planted, as this could contribute to better anticipating and mitigating wildfire risks.
5. The EU and its Member States recognize that urban and peri-urban forests and trees are key components of resilient and liveable cities. Their contribution to climate adaptation, mitigation of urban heat island effects, ecosystem restoration and social inclusion makes them an indispensable element of sustainable urban development strategies. We therefore invite Members to further integrate urban and peri-urban forestry into national forest programmes, urban planning frameworks, Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans, biodiversity strategies and disaster risk reduction policies.
6. We also welcome the ongoing preparation of the second edition of the Guidelines on Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry, which will provide an important and updated reference for policymakers and practitioners worldwide.
7. In addition, we appreciate FAO's attention to sustainable wood-based construction as part of the Green Cities Initiative. Sustainably sourced wood products can support the transition towards more resource-efficient, low-carbon and resilient cities, while creating stronger links

between sustainable forest management, circular bioeconomy approaches and urban development.

8. In this regard, we would like to highlight the synergies with the New European Bauhaus initiative, which promotes sustainable, inclusive, and high-quality urban environments. Through the integration of nature-based solutions, green infrastructure, and renewable bio-based materials, including sustainably sourced wood, it aims at demonstrating how cities can enhance climate resilience, improve quality of life, and strengthen connections between urban communities and nature.
9. Finally, the EU and its Member States support the four actions proposed for endorsement by the Committee and encourage FAO to continue advancing the Green Cities Initiative through strengthened partnerships, technical guidance, knowledge exchange and support to implementation, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources. Thank you, Madam / Mr. Chair.