

Statement by Astrid Schomaker, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity

International Day of Forests (21 March 2025) “Forests and foods” (Video message)

The theme of this year’s edition of the International Day of Forests is “Forests and foods”.

Five billion people depend on forests for food and livelihoods, for fuel and medicine.

Forest habitats harbour 80 per cent of all terrestrial biodiversity. Trees help keep moisture in the soil, feed pollinators and protect crops from winds, thus boosting productivity in nearby fields.

In times of soaring food prices and economic shocks, forests provide a safety net for the most vulnerable communities.

But the world is losing 10 million hectares of forests every year. Their wildlife population has decreased by 53 per cent since 1970.

This has far-reaching and disruptive impacts on a wide range of ecosystem services: from pollination and seed dispersal to the water cycle and climate regulation.

Both wildlife and human health and well-being suffer as a consequence.

Urgent action is needed to halt the loss while also preserving high-integrity forests.

The world must leverage science and technology to increase agricultural production sustainably.

The transformation of agrifood systems and sustainable production and consumption are key.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework—the KMGBF— provides a blueprint for the required transformations to halt and reverse biodiversity loss through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society endeavor.

From the lush tropical forests to those encountered in drylands, traditional knowledge on how to live in harmony with forests has transcended generations of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Their knowledge is recognized - it must feed into transformative policies.

The required transformations can be pursued through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans – NBSAPs—that are aligned with the global ambition of the KMGBF.

We at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity look forward to relaunching the expanded Programme of Work on forest biodiversity addressing these priorities and others outlined by the Parties, stakeholders and partners.

Forests constitute a vital component of the natural tapestry that underpins life on Earth. Let us do more to protect them.