

H.E. Ambassador Nabeel Munir, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council

Opening Remarks

Special event in celebration of the International Day of Forests

Tuesday, 21 March 2017, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York

It is a great pleasure, in my capacity as Vice-President of ECOSOC, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, to address the opening of this special event in celebration of the International Day of Forests.

Since its inception 70 years ago, the Council has promoted system-wide coordination on economic, social and environmental issues in the work of the UN. In particular, ECOSOC works to foster the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development and mobilize the UN system to support global, regional and national strategies, through its functional commissions, regional commissions, and standing committees.

Over fifteen years ago, the UN Forum on Forests was established as a functional commission of ECOSOC, to promote sustainable forest management at all levels and strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. The Forum addresses all issues related to forests, and provides a unique global platform to engage in action-oriented, substantive discussions on the challenges and opportunities that impact forests, while at the same time highlighting the contributions that forests make in supporting the global development agenda.

The Council and its subsidiary bodies contribute to promoting implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Council through its focus on development cooperation and coordination of the UN system, facilitates integration between both policy and operational aspects of sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the new UN Strategic Plan for Forests, set out an ambitious vision for a better, greener, more inclusive and sustainable world. Realising this vision will require a renewed commitment to breaking down the silos that persist in the work of the United Nations.

The 2017 ECOSOC main theme is “Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges”, and the theme of the 2017 High-level Political Forum, is “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”.

The topic of today’s event – forests and energy – is an example of two development issues that are directly related to poverty eradication. As highlighted in the Secretary-General’s message, one-third of the world’s population, more than 2 billion people rely on fuelwood for their energy needs. The people and communities that are the most dependant on wood for energy, live in regions with the highest incidence of poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Clearly, if we are to successfully implement the SDG 15 and SDG7, and build a future where no one is left behind, where we can meet the needs for both sustainable forests and sustainable, affordable energy; we can only do so through an integrated and coordinated approach.

We live in an increasingly complex and volatile world, where the challenge of making a positive change in turning the tide on inequality, exclusion and environmental degradation – may seem daunting. On the occasion of the International Day of Forests, let us take this opportunity to rise to the challenge, and renew our commitment to break down silos and institutional barriers. We, as one UN, must come together to take collective action on forests and energy for all.

Thank you