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**Message on 2018 International Day of Forests**

**21 March 2018**

Greetings to all on this International Day of Forests!

It is a timely opportunity to reflect on the value of forests, and share insights and ideas on interconnections between forests and cities.

2018 is a pivotal year for forests. The 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will review in depth the status of progress made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 15 on life on land, and Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, among other goals.

Also, the UN Forum on Forests will hold its thirteenth session in May 2018 and will have the first policy session after the adoption of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030. This universal masterplan on forests calls for global action to sustainably manage all types of forests and trees, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations through six Global Forest Goals.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is about taking a new and innovative approach to realize opportunities for billions of people, particularly those who have been left behind. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are about eliminating poverty, creating decent jobs, providing clean water and energy, safeguarding ecosystems and combating climate change.

Forests and cities cut across all the goals. One third of the world's largest cities, from Abidjan and Madrid, to Mumbai and Rio de Janeiro, rely on forested areas for a large portion of their drinking water. As the global population continues to grow, particularly in urban areas, safeguarding the water-providing capacity of forests has become an urgent issue.

This is just one example of the complex interlinkages among forest and urbanization issues. If we are to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and targets on forests and cities, we must take an integrated and coordinated approach across sectors and stakeholders.

On this International Day of Forests, let us take concrete action to raise awareness about the importance of all types of forests and trees to our economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. As we plough ahead to implement the 2030 Agenda, let us acknowledge the vital role of forests and pledge to work together to protect and sustainably manage these vital ecosystems.