

21 March 2014

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe  
President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly,  
on the International Day of Forests and the Tree**

Celebrated now for two years, the International Day of Forests and the Tree calls on governments and other multi stakeholders to commit to reducing deforestation while promoting sustainable livelihoods for all forest-dependent communities.

Forests cover one third of the Earth's land mass and over 1.6 billion people depend on forest ecosystems for their daily livelihoods.

As we work to create a post 2015 sustainable development agenda, I urge Member States to recognize the ecological, economic, social and health benefits of our forests.

In recent years, global deforestation has spread at an alarming rate. Over 13 million hectares of forest are destroyed each year and deforestation accounts for 12 to 20 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming.

This day marks a worldwide commemoration to celebrate our forests and to raise awareness of the importance of protecting our essential global ecosystems.