

Statement for UNFF16/HLRT of Director General Eva Mueller, Germany

Excellencies, delegates and colleagues,

Forests in Germany are an **integral part of our cultural landscape**. They are owned by two million individuals, families and farmers as well as municipalities, the church and the federal states. They fulfil a diverse range of functions, simultaneously and in the same area.

The principle of sustainability is firmly anchored in our forest legislation, our tradition and long-term experience.

And this pays off in terms of manifold **forest-based solutions** to current crises:

- For example, in the pandemic, 90% of the German public see forests as **the space** for experiencing nature and recreational visits to forests have more than doubled.
- Forests **preserve our biodiversity**: the significant loss of biodiversity observed in agricultural and other landscapes is not occurring in our forests.
- and forests and sustainable forestry contribute effectively and inexpensively to achieving **climate neutrality**: without them, yearly greenhouse gas emissions in Germany would be up to 14% higher.

However, the climate change related extreme weather events in the past three years have had a huge impact on our forests, causing significant damage. As a response, we developed a **set of actions linked to our national climate protection programme** to promote

- restoring degraded forest areas,
- adapting our forests to climate change, and
- promoting investments in forestry and innovative and climate-friendly wood construction.

The 1.5 billion euros **the German government has made available for this** demonstrates our confidence in **forest-based solutions**.

In fact, Germany **strongly believes in the huge potential** of forest-based solutions to address global challenges and to achieve the SDGs.

But it is essential to **scale-up actions worldwide** to realise this potential. The pandemic has taught us that business as usual is not a pathway for sustainable recovery.

We need to be **creative and innovative**, creating **win-win situations** for forests and the actors influencing them.

This includes the **private sector** and here I do not mean only large agricultural or forest-based companies, but also small farmers and forest producers and others along the supply chain. It also includes consumers.

Sustainable and deforestation-free supply chains of agricultural and forest products have to **pay off for those involved**. This implies a need for **concerted engagement of governments** to create the **policy and fiscal framework** that facilitates and promotes private sector involvement in sustainable supply chains.