

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Portugal aligns itself with the intervention made by France on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Let me first thank all members of the panel for their valuable contribution to the discussion.

Today I would like to highlight the important role that forests play in Portugal's roadmap towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

These actions also contribute more broadly to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda – in particular SDG 15 – and to the delivery of all Global Forest Goals under the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF).

In our case, forests are eminently private and a large part is in small holdings. In addition, fire risk is high and climate change has been exacerbating forests' phytosanitary problems. These are major challenges which require a permanent evaluation of policies and instruments to keep them up-to-date and, above all, which require constant cooperation among partners and across sectors.

Allow me to mention some examples of Portugal's work in this area.

- a. Firstly, we revised our National Strategy for Forests in 2015, and our regional forest management programs, in 2019;
- b. Secondly, we have strived to continuously improve a vast set of legislation aiming at the protection and improvement of forest management. This includes, for example, mandatory forest management

plans for agro-forestry holdings and mechanisms to promote cooperation between forest owners to jointly manage their forests;

c. Thirdly, we adopted a new National Plan for Integrated Wildland Fire Management, in 2021;

d. Fourthly, we adopted a new legislative instrument that requires the prior declaration of timber harvesting and its traceability, facilitating due diligence and the verification of legality of wood and wood products entering the value chain;

e. Lastly, we put in place (re)afforestation and rehabilitation programs, after major wildfires in 2017.

But as you know, sustainable forest management requires a process of continuous improvement, refinement and adaptation to changing conditions.

Sustainable forest management (SFM) and sustainable value chains for forest products can facilitate collaboration across sectors and among stakeholders, and improve human and social capital to effect transformative change, thus overcoming the negative impacts of the recent pandemic. In this regard, UNFF should play a key role in advocating forests and SFM as nature-based solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate change, preventing biodiversity loss and combatting desertification and land degradation.

Finally, distinguished colleagues, let me conclude by reaffirming Portugal's commitment to work together with all of you to advance actions to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030.