

Statement by H. E. Martin Kováč, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, on the occasion of the High Level Round Table: “UNFF response to, role in, and expectations from forest-related multilateral developments” of the Seventeenth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 17), delivered in writing

9 May 2022, hybrid format

Madam Chairperson, Excellences, distinguished delegates,

1. Slovakia aligns itself with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.
2. Forests, if sustainably managed, contribute to all 17 (seventeen) SDGs. In fact, they stand in the core of many solutions that can lead us to the achievement of a fundamental goal, which is a transformation of our world into the better place to live where no one is left behind. In this regard, multifunctional and resilient forests can provide a wide range of ecosystem services for benefits of the whole society and planet.
3. At all levels, coherence is a key. When fighting deforestation and forest degradation globally, we stress the importance of implementing sustainable and integrated land use systems. Sustainable forest management provides us with one of key solutions in this regard. Involvement of all relevant stakeholders is a must.
4. In order to achieve this, Slovakia has recently taken several concrete measures in favour of sustainable forest management to achieve the Global Forest Goals and other international forest-related commitments.
5. Development of our new National Forest Programme is on the top of those activities. The programme will define national goals, priorities, and actions related to forests and their sustainable management by 2030. To ensure coherence and coordination, a new Programme is being developed with the involvement and broad participation of stakeholders. This process takes also into account the current international commitments that relates to forests, including UN Strategic Plan for Forests and biodiversity and climate commitments, such as Glasgow Climate Pact.
6. This goes hand in hand with our efforts and concrete actions aimed at implementing the European Green Deal. In this regard, we prepare measures that will reflect on the objective of climate stability and carbon neutrality.

7. Namely, we work on measures that will help forest owners and managers to implement sustainable forest management on the ground. Financial incentives and compensation mechanisms for providing ecosystem services, including carbon sequestration, soil protection, and water retention, are currently in main focus. Adapting forests to climate change is an integral part of this effort and key requirement.
8. We continue to implement the system of direct payments for forest owners with the aim to support the provision of non-productive functions of forests. The system, in principle, can be utilized by every forest owner who care about forests according to forest management plan, which means in line with principles of sustainable forest management. The system also motivates forest owners to practise and apply to more extent close-to-nature practices and adaptive measures in forest management.
9. The UN Forum on Forests needs to play more active and direct role and further explore possibilities to strengthen cooperation and synergies with the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the three Rio Conventions. Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) can play an active role in this context.

Thank you for your attention.