

**Remarks of Mr. Boris Greguška  
Chair of UNFF14 and 15**

**2019 session of the  
United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

**Ministerial Session on “Message to the HLPF”**

**4:00- 4:30 p.m., Tuesday 16 July 2019, UNHQ, New York**

**Your Excellency Ambassador Inga Rhonda King, President of the Economic and Social Council,**

**Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,**

I wish to thank the President of the Council for inviting me to introduce the outcome of the Fourteenth Session of the UN Forum on Forests- UNFF14 in my capacity as its Chair.

UNFF14 was convened from 6 to 10 May 2019 in New York. UNFF14 held technical discussions and exchange of experiences on its three thematic priorities, taking into account the SDGs under review of the current session of the HLPF. UNFF14 thematic priorities were: i) Forests and climate change; ii) Forests, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and employment; and iii) Forests, peaceful and inclusive societies, reduced inequality, education, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

UNFF14 discussions identified a set of key challenges and priorities to chart the way forward with regard to the theme of the 2019 HLPF “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality” and the five SDGs under its in-depth review.

The discussions of UNFF14 on its thematic priorities encompass economic, social and environmental contributions of forests to sustainable development, highlighting the progress made, as well as gaps and risks in achieving the SDGs. Among these priorities contained in the Chair’s summary, I wish to draw your attention, particularly, to the three UNFF14’s key message to the 2019 HLPF.

First, we must scale up implementation of forest-based solutions to climate change. Forests can and should make a significant contribution to combat climate change. Successful implementation of forest-based actions could reduce greenhouse gas by an estimated 15 gigatonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide a year by 2050, potentially closing the current emissions’ gap.

These forest-based actions entail actions to halt deforestation and forest degradation, promote sustainable forest management and increase forest area. In addition, harvested wood products can contribute to climate change mitigation through carbon storage and by replacing products manufactured from more greenhouse-gas-intensive materials, such as concrete or brick, metals or plastics.

In addition, there is a pressing need to integrate climate mitigation and adaptation policies more fully into forest and land use policies at all levels, as well as mobilizing adequate levels of finance from all sources for sustainable forest management. At present, only minimal funds for climate change mitigation is available for reducing deforestation and even less is

available for adaptation. Furthermore, it is essential to promote more effective forest governance and law enforcement, while at the same time improving scientific understanding of the interactions between forest ecosystems, including soils, with climate change.

Second, many of the world's poorest people live in or near forests and their livelihoods are improved where they have secure and equitable access to, and control over forest resources. Secure forest tenure and rights to use forest resources are a prerequisite for the sustainable management of forests and the sustainable harvesting of forest products.

Furthermore, forests play a special and important role in the economy of many countries and rural communities, especially the poorer ones. Support for small-scale landholders and indigenous peoples can enhance the contribution of forests to social inclusion and equality.

In many countries, small-scale landholders are farmers as well as forest managers. Sustainable and inclusive growth can often be enhanced through appropriate policy interventions. These may include extension services, financial services, infrastructure and access to markets. Devolving forest management rights to local communities and smallholders can help secure inclusive and sustainable economic activity.

Third, as we move forward to the next cycle of the HLPF, what is essential is to accelerate the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 -UNSPF, our joint framework for forest-related action to advance implementation of the internationally agreed goals and targets on forests, as well as the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

In order to advance implementation and actions on the ground, it is critically important to underpin efforts to ensure that the world's forests are managed sustainably for the benefit of current and future generations, by encouraging policy-makers at all levels to recognize the potential contribution of forests, the importance of cross-sectoral coordination, and the role of the UNSPF 2030 as a framework for forest-related contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This can be taken forward by promoting the UNSPF and its six Global Forest Goals more widely as the internationally agreed framework for forest-related action. In this context, I would like to urge the HLPF to pay special attention to the implementation of the UNSPF in the new programme of work of the HLPF.

In closing, a significant opportunity exists before us in scaling up forest-based solutions and increasing policy coherence. Let us join hands and work together to share, apply and scale up best practices on forest-based actions, so we could accelerate the progress towards the attainment of our shared goals and commitments.

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