



**Remarks by H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva
President of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
2023 celebration of the International Day of Forests
Healthy Forests | Healthy People
21 March 2023, 10am, CR6, UNHQ**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you for this special event on the International Day of Forests.

Throughout history, our world's forests have supported our health and well-being. It is impossible to picture a greener, sustainable future without healthy, well-managed forests.

For the Economic and Social Council, forests have been a priority for over two decades. In 2000, the Council demonstrated its commitment by establishing the UN Forum on Forests as the global intergovernmental body to deliberate on all aspects of forests.

Sustainable forest management is an integral part of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It has a vital role in lifting millions out of poverty and in building resilient economies and societies that can withstand pandemics, climate change, and other global challenges.

The theme of today's celebration - forests and health - aligns with the theme of the 2023 HLPF "Accelerating the recovery from COVID-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels."

The theme of forests and health is also interlinked with the SDGs that will be reviewed in depth at the 2023 HLPF. These include SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation; SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy; SDG 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure; SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the Goals.



Forests play a crucial part in the hydrological cycle, with three-quarters of the planet's accessible freshwater coming from forested watersheds. Around 2.4 billion people still rely on wood fuel to meet their basic energy needs, such as cooking food, boiling water, and heating their homes. Forest products underpin global industries. Urban forests are an essential component in sustainable cities. Forests are crucial for biodiversity preservation and carbon storage, and for providing livelihoods of forest communities. Forests are essential to build resilience to climate shocks.

Sustainably managed forests hold the key to our healthy recovery from the multitude of crises we face currently and strengthen our resilience to withstand future crises.

Regardless of how you define health, be it physical, mental, or spiritual – forests have a role to play.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are all working towards the same goals. The challenge is finding a way to work together better. We need bold global partnerships for reversing extreme poverty and mobilizing finance for all aspects of sustainable development. We need more targeted support for marginalized and vulnerable communities, many of whom are forest-dependent, to ensure that no one is left behind. We need innovative solutions that involve all actors – from governments to scientists, young people and indigenous people, civil society, and the private sector. I am happy to see many of these stakeholders represented at this event today.

This celebration is an opportunity to rally the call for forests, from today through the rest of this year. From the UN Forum on Forests' 18th session in May, to the HLPF in July, to the SDG Summit in September. As citizens of this world, we all have the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

As President of the Economic and Social Council, I am committed to strengthening multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity to halt deforestation and protect, restore, and sustainably use forest ecosystems.

I wish you a happy International Day of Forests.

Thank you.