



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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United Nations Forum on Forests – Ministerial Roundtable 7 May 2018

Forest-based solutions for accelerating achievement of the SDGs

**Statement by HE Ms Gillian Bird
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the
United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

Chair, Ministers and distinguished delegates.

I am representing the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston, who has responsibility for forestry issues. Senator Ruston was unable to attend today's roundtable.

Australia has 125 million hectares of forest cover, making us the 7th most forested nation in the world. While 10 million hectares of Australia's public forests are classified for multiple use such as timber production, we have set aside over 21 million hectares of public forests solely for conservation.

Australia has a long-standing commitment to sustainable forest management, a commitment also shared by industry.

26.7 million hectares of native forest and commercial plantations are certified under the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme, while 1.2 million hectares has been certified by Forest Stewardship Council.

In two months' time, Australia will present our first Voluntary National Review on our progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

It will highlight Australia's achievements, priorities and challenges in advancing the 2030 Agenda.

The SDGs highlight that sustainably managed forests provide significant environmental, economic and social benefits. Collectively we must communicate and educate the community on the diverse benefits that forests provide.

Forests deliver essential services such as clean air, fresh water, shelter and food. They provide habitat for animals. They store carbon. And they are culturally significant to many.

Forests provide wood for construction, fuel for heating and cooking, and fibre for paper. And, forests provide employment for millions of people globally.

The challenge, not only for governments but also the private sector and civil society, is to ensure we manage our native and plantation forests for present and future generations.

As our Prime Minister has said, sustainable forestry is “the ultimate renewable industry”.

Australia's native forestry activities are underpinned by the Regional Forest Agreements framework. Based on science and developed through consultation, these agreements deliver:

- certainty of resource access for industry;
- sustainably managed and regenerated native forests; and
- an expanded conservation estate to protect Australia's unique forest biodiversity.

Internationally, Australia supports countries in the region to develop measurement, reporting and monitoring systems to manage their forests and understand their role in addressing climate change.

Australia plays an active role in promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products through laws to combat the trade products sourced from damaging illegal logging practices. We work with and support our trading partners to ensure legal and transparent supply chains.

Later this year, Australia will deliver a new forest industries plan. This plan will reaffirm Australia's commitment to sustainable forest management by expanding the plantation base, encouraging farm forestry and making better use of native forests.

We urge all Member States to come together to advance the Global Forest Goals. Thank you.