



To The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

Formal Complaint Regarding Messaging for the International Day of Forests

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to express our deep concern and dismay regarding certain messages proposed in this year's communications for the International Day of Forests this March 21st.

We represent an [international network](#) of over 380 organisations campaigning for the protection and restoration of forests worldwide. In previous years, we have actively mobilised in support of this important global event. However, this year we are profoundly concerned that elements of the suggested messaging risk promoting practices that contribute to forest degradation and destruction.

In particular, we are troubled by statements included in the [social media kit](#) provided, which promote the *expansion of the bioeconomy centred on forest resources; the increased use of wood as substitutes for other materials; the burning of woody biomass for energy; and projections of significantly increased global demand for industrial roundwood by 2050.*

These messages contradict a fundamental pillar of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), [the Precautionary Principle](#), and may even jeopardise progress recently achieved at [CBD COP16](#). We urge you to reconsider them for the reasons outlined below:

The economic imperative to increase wood harvesting conflicts with the effective provision of other critical services that forests provide - including climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, water retention and regulation, air purification, and as a source of food, medicine and materials for forest-dependent and Indigenous peoples. It is essential to recognise that maximising all these functions, while simultaneously meeting an increasing demand for wood, is often not possible.

Globally, forest ecosystems are already under severe pressure. Current global levels of wood consumption exceed production capacities, and forests are increasingly overexploited. Rising demand for high-volume, low-value wood-based products — including single-use packaging and biomass for energy — has intensified harvesting rates and exacerbated deforestation, forest degradation, biodiversity loss, and social harms. In several regions, increased logging has been associated with declining carbon sinks and, in some cases, forests becoming net carbon sources. The carbon sinks that forests provide are critical for combating climate change.

Replacing fossil fuels and products with wood-based ones is neither “green” nor “sustainable” because of negative impacts on both climate and biodiversity. When wood is immediately burned for energy or used for short lived products like paper, the carbon is released into the atmosphere. In fact, burning biomass for energy generation [emits at least as much CO2 as coal burning](#), per unit of energy produced, and it is usually higher, as [scientific research proves](#). Ignoring these emissions has only been made possible due to a [loophole in the carbon accounting](#)

[system](#) which creates a false impression of zero emissions for biomass energy, in comparison to emissions from burning fossil fuels.

Logging forests for biomass energy production and short-lived products directs wood toward the least efficient *and* lowest-value applications, while undermining forests' broader economic, ecological, and social contributions. It can deprive access to forests for food, medicine and materials, as well as threaten businesses by limiting access to wood for higher-value and longer-lasting products. Globally, forests simply cannot withstand continued expansion of wood extraction at scale.

In light of these concerns, we formally request that you review, update, and remove the following messaging from your communications channels and social media materials related to this year's International Day of Forests:

- 1. The emerging bioeconomy has forests at its heart. Wood and bamboo can be used as renewable replacements for carbon-intensive materials such as steel, concrete and plastics;*
- 2. Woodfuel makes substantial contributions to economies at both the household and industrial scales. Fuelwood and charcoal provide essential energy for cooking and heating to more than 2 billion people worldwide and support the livelihoods of hundreds of millions more, while modern woodfuel such as pellets are used at an industrial scale for power and heat applications.*
- 3. Demand for forest products is at an all-time high. About 4 billion cubic metres of wood are being produced per year, with demand projected to rise as the population grows and the world seeks to replace carbon-intensive products with renewables – potentially requiring an additional 1 billion cubic metres of industrial roundwood by 2050.*

Current interpretations of the “bioeconomy” all too often focus on promoting nature over-exploitation at scale, e.g. through shifting from plastic to paper and from fossil fuels to biomass. This is fundamentally wrong as material substitution only moves the problem elsewhere - in this case, to forests. **The real solution is to implement genuinely renewable energy and reduce material consumption.** Additionally a bioeconomy which truly has “forests at its heart” would:

- Focus on implementing large scale reuse systems for packaging, in order to abandon the disposable culture and waste mindset in which our economies operate.
- Promote genuinely clean, renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, and incentivise energy efficiency.
- Focus on truly ecologically sustainable, natural resource-efficient ways that have high added value to the economy.

We urge you to align future communications with approaches that unequivocally safeguard forest ecosystems, biodiversity, climate stability, and the rights and livelihoods of forest-dependent peoples.

We look forward to your timely response. Please note that we intend to share your reply with our network of organisations advocating for forest protection, as it will influence our participation in the event on the 21st of March.

On behalf of the Environmental Paper Network,

Reija Mikkola