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# Statement By Archbishop Caccia At The UN Forum On Forests

**By H. E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia**

Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations

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Madam Chair,

The Holy See welcomes this Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, which marks the mid-term of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests (2017-2030), a crucial framework for international cooperation in the safeguarding and sustainable management of our planet's forests.

On this occasion, the Holy See wishes to reaffirm the importance of a holistic approach to the stewardship of the environment. Pope Francis has consistently called for an integral ecology, which recognizes the intrinsic value of the creation and promotes a culture of care and respect for our "common home which God has entrusted to us."<sup>[1]</sup> In his words, "an integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics."<sup>[2]</sup> It therefore emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation and calls for an integrated approach to environmental, social and economic challenges. In the context of forests, this means recognizing that they are simultaneously vital ecosystems, sources of economic livelihoods, carbon sinks, reservoirs of biodiversity and key elements of social well-being.

Therefore, when it comes to Global Forest Goal 2, caring for the environment cannot be separated from our concern for human well-being. Forests are not only repositories of biodiversity and natural resources, but also engines of sustainable development, providing livelihoods, clean water and climate regulation for millions of people around the world. It is therefore essential that all actions related to forests are directed towards the integral development of forest-dependent people, including in areas related to poverty eradication and food security.

With reference to Global Forest Goal 3, the Holy See underlines that by expanding protected areas and promoting sustainable forest management, we can conserve biodiversity, mitigate climate change and ensure the long-term viability of our forests for

future generations. At the same time, the socio-economic realities of local populations should be adequately taken into account. Balancing conservation goals with the needs of local communities, promoting inclusive governance structures, supporting sustainable livelihood alternatives, and implementing landscape-scale conservation approaches are key steps in this direction.

Madam Chair,

While advancing action in these areas, integral ecology emphasizes the importance of addressing the root causes of environmental degradation, such as unsustainable consumption and land use patterns, illegal logging and the pursuit of profit at the expense of ecological integrity. For example, all too often situations are witnessed where, as long as production is increased, there is little concern about whether this is at the cost of future resources, the health of the environment, or the well-being of forest-dependent people; as long as deforestation increases production, no one calculates the losses in terms of land desertification, damage biodiversity, increased pollution, or detrimental impacts on local populations.[3]

It is therefore of paramount importance to adopt an integral ecology approach, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of environmental, social and economic factors, thereby ensuring a holistic approach that respects the integrity of ecosystems and communities.

Thank you.

[1] Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 24 May 2015, No. 232.

[2] Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 24 May 2015, No. 156.

[3] Cfr. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 24 May 2015, No. 195.



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