

## **21st March - A special day for Forest**

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Every year, the 21st of March is celebrated as 'International Day of Forest'. The International Day of Forest is being observed as a global effort to promote awareness about the significance and contributions of the forests for the sustenance of life on earth. The International Day of Forest formerly known as World Forestry Day was instituted in November 1971 after a voting at the 16th session of the Conference of Food and Agriculture Organization. Even though this is an excellent initiative, it couldn't raise an effective awareness in every individual. By realizing the role of forests in reducing carbon emissions, a conference was held in 2007 and it helped to develop momentum for the next step. It was a fruitful event and attracted many members of Government agencies and NGOs. From 2007 to 2012, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Indonesia organised a series of 6 Forest days in different parts of the world. In 2012, the year next to the declaration of 2011 as the International Year of Forest in the Ninth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF-9) held in New York, the United Nations General Assembly voted to formalize International Day of Forests with proper theme containing clear objective for every year to raise awareness of various types of forest. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21st March the International Day of Forests in 2012.

The theme of the International Day of Forest, 2024 is "Forests and Innovation : New Solutions for a Better World". With innovation and advancement in technology the monitoring of forests has been transformed, helping Nations to observe and report on their forests more efficiently. Indeed, the fight against deforestation necessitates new developments in technology. Reducing deforestation and forest degradation and restoring and managing forests sustainably are essential steps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030.

Every year an area of 10 million hectares is lost due to deforestation and an area of approximately 70 million hectares is affected by forest fires. Therefore, these innovations are crucial for the development of sustainable commodity production, early warning systems, and the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples through land mapping and access to climate finance (Climate finance refers to financial resources and instruments that are used to support action on climate change). An example of such innovation is AIM4Forests (Accelerating Innovative Monitoring for Forests).

It is a five-year program jointly operated by FAO and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The program aims to enhance forest monitoring through modern technologies, technical innovation, and utilising space data and remote sensing. Moreover, while overcoming the challenges of sustainable wood products, ecosystem restoration including reforestation initiatives, can also considerably improve food security and climate change mitigation. It can be considered literally as enhancing food security and mitigating climate change while promoting sustainable wood products. FAO described that Innovation can help to restore, protect, manage and use forests sustainably.

Technological, social, policy, institutional and financial innovations are key to ensuring the sustainable supply and use of forest ecosystem services. From construction to medicine, innovations in forest products are helping create alternatives to unsustainable materials such as concrete, steel, plastics and synthetic fibres, while sustainable wood products store carbon for their lifetime.

Lastly, it is necessary to protect, preserve, conserve and sustainably manage the forest because of the reason that forestsharbouraround 1.6 billion people worldwide, forests are home to many threatened and endemic species, and since 1960 onwards 30% of diseases have been attributed to land use change mainly deforestation. Forests also act as regulators and supporters of the environment. As per the Global Forest Review, the forest of the world stores approximately 861 gigatonnes of carbon, with 44% in soil, 42% in live biomass, 8% in dead wood and 5% in litter could be cited as example of the role of forest for mitigating global climate change.

Additionally, ecosystem restoration, including reforestation efforts, can significantly contribute to climate mitigation and enhance food security while pushing the boundaries of sustainable wood products. and enhance food security while promoting sustainable wood products. So, let us encourage the conservation of forests for a better tomorrow.

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