

WFUNA
801 First Avenue
3rd Floor
New York, NY, 10017

Email: wimun@wfuna.org
Phone: +41 (0) 22 917 32 74
Instagram: [@wimunsecretariat](https://www.instagram.com/wimunsecretariat)



WIMUN NEW YORK 2026
FOREST DAY
SUMMARY

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS 2025 - 21 MARCH

Event Summary

Overview

The 2025 observance of the **International Day of Forests** highlighted the theme "**Forests and Foods**", emphasizing the vital role forests play in global food systems, nutrition, sustainable livelihoods, and climate resilience. The event, organized by the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat in collaboration with FAO and other partners, brought together high-level dignitaries, experts, community leaders, youth, and representatives from Member States to celebrate and reflect on the interdependence between forests and food.

Opening Segment

Ms. Juliette Biao, Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, inaugurated the event by welcoming participants and underscoring the multifaceted value of forests. She noted forests' critical contributions to food security, biodiversity, climate action, and the livelihoods of millions, especially Indigenous Peoples and rural communities.

Video messages from **Mr. Ismail Belen**, Chair of the UNFF20 Bureau, and **Mr. Zhimin Wu**, Director of FAO Forestry Division, reaffirmed the importance of forests in combating food insecurity and promoting sustainability.

Panel Discussion Highlights

Moderated by **Ms. Angélica Jácome**, Director, FAO NY Liaison Office – the panel featured powerful interventions showcasing diverse experiences and insights:

- Ambassador **Inga Rhonda King** highlighted Haiti's urgent food insecurity crisis and the central role reforestation must play in addressing both environmental and humanitarian challenges.
- **Ms. Eliane Ubalijoro** (CIFOR-ICRAF) emphasized the overlooked links between food systems and forests and advocated for inclusive land management approaches to strengthen climate resilience.
- **Ms. Tarcila Rivera Zea**, Indigenous leader from Peru, called for the recognition and integration of traditional knowledge in food and forest policies, emphasizing the role of Indigenous women in food sovereignty.
- **Mr. Nathan Hunter**, coordinator of the Bronx River Foodway, showcased how urban food forests can transform communities by blending ecology, culture, and food security in a concrete-dominated environment.
- **Ms. Lindsey Jerome** from Stone Barns Center presented a case study on how integrating goats into forest management helped restore ecosystems while producing food sustainably.

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Panel Discussion Highlights (cont.)

- Ms. Airi Gavan and Mr. Rizka Afif (IFSA) provided youth perspectives, stressing agroforestry, education, and advocacy for forest-based food systems across Southeast Asia.
- Ms. Inna Modja (UNCCD Goodwill Ambassador) shared a compelling video message about the Great Green Wall, advocating reforestation as a pathway to dignity, food security, and hope in the Sahel.

Special Remarks

Mr. Li Junhua, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, emphasized the need for financing and policy integration to scale up forest-based solutions for sustainable development, reaffirming forests as economic assets, biodiversity havens, and climate regulators.

Key takeaways from Member State remarks

1. Forests are integral to national development and climate action

Countries emphasized that forests are not only environmental assets but also national development priorities. Brazil, Indonesia, China and Iran underscored the role of forests in achieving climate targets, supporting rural livelihoods, and securing economic resilience.

2. Recognition of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as forest stewards

Several Member States—including Peru, Mexico, and Nepal—highlighted the importance of empowering Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities, both as guardians of biodiversity and as central actors in forest-based economies and food systems.

3. Forest finance remains a global priority

Multiple countries, including Suriname, Guyana, Papua New Guinea, and the UK emphasized the importance of forest financing. There was a shared call to recognize and invest in the ecosystem services that healthy forests provide. —especially in countries with high forest cover and low deforestation.

4. Agroforestry and Non-Timber Forest Products are gaining strategic attention

From Georgia to Russia and Tanzania, Member States promoted agroforestry and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as tools for sustainable development, food security, and rural empowerment.

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Key takeaways from Member State remarks (cont.)

5. Afforestation, restoration, and national forest strategies are expanding

Countries including Türkiye, Moldova, Israel and Chile shared national reforestation goals and strategies for expanding forest cover, restoring degraded lands, and building climate resilience through integrated forest management.

6. Culture, identity, and public engagement are central to forest policy

Member States such as Latvia, Czechia, and Croatia emphasized the cultural and social dimensions of forests. Public access, national heritage, and citizen participation were highlighted as essential to sustainable forest management.

7. Support for multilateralism and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests was strong

Many delegations, including those from the European Union to Peru and Iran (in their role as UNFF20 Vice-Chairs), expressed strong support for the UN's global forest framework and called for enhanced coordination and international cooperation under the UNFF and Global Forest Goals.