

**U.S. input for Ministerial Declaration**

November 4, 2019

**I. Structure and Tone**

The Ministerial Declaration should be concise, ideally no more than two pages.

The Ministerial Declaration should focus on high-level issues without getting into details, particularly on points under negotiation at UNFF15, though it should offer support for the decisions of UNFF15.

Preambular language should be kept to a minimum and avoid citations to previous agreements, decisions, as well as to processes and decisions from non-UNFF bodies, etc. The text should be meaningful and accessible to readers with no specialized knowledge of, or familiarity with, United Nations processes, institutions and decisions.

The language should be political in nature rather than legal (e.g., it should not use terms such as shall, will, agree, etc.)

**II. Proposed Ministerial Declaration Elements**

***The Declaration should recognize that:***

Forests are crucial for sustainable development. Forests – as well as other natural ecosystems – constitute essential “natural infrastructure” for sustainable economic development, poverty alleviation, and improved human well being.

Healthy forests are part of the equation in addressing so many of the priority issues identified in the proposed Sustainable Development Goals, such as food security and agriculture, energy, clean water and watershed protection, disaster risk reduction, and environmental sustainability.

There is still progress to be made to meet the commitments of SDG15 and the target to “By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.”

***The Declaration should support:***

The importance of national actions to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage forests; Increased recognition of the full value and multiple benefits of forests through increased cross-sector planning and integration of the valuation of forest ecosystem services into economic development planning and policies, especially their benefits in eradicating poverty, improving food security, combating climate change, conserving biodiversity, combating desertification, sustaining the world’s water resources, and contributing to human health and well-being;

Strengthening forest governance at all levels including by improving the clarity and security of land tenure; building more effective and accountable public and civil society institutions; strengthening national and subnational cooperation; enabling community-based forest management; cooperating to promote trade in legal forest products; and developing policies that enable public and private sector investment in sustainable forest management (SFM);