UNITED NATIONS **NATIONS UNIES**

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS

21 March 2016

The world's forests are essential to realizing our shared vision for people and the planet. They are central to our future prosperity and the stability of the global climate. That is why the Sustainable Development Goals call for transformative action to safeguard them.

In this first year of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the International Day of Forests focuses on their role in supporting water systems. Forested catchments provide three-quarters of all the freshwater used for farms, industry and homes.

City dwellers in Bogota, Durban, Jakarta, Madrid, New York, Rio de Janeiro and many other major cities rely on forested areas for a significant portion of their drinking water. When we protect and restore forested watersheds, we can save on the cost of building new infrastructure for water purification.

As the global population grows and demands for water escalate, safeguarding the water-providing capacity of forests is becoming more urgent. By 2025, nearly 1.8 billion people will live in areas with absolute water scarcity, and two-thirds of the world population could face water-stressed conditions.

Forests are also central to addressing climate change. Forests provide one of th