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United Nations Forum on Forests 12th Session
Farmers and Small Forest Landowners Major Group Opening statement
delivered by the International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA)

Mr. Chairman,

The Farmers and Small Forest Landowners Major Group believe that the attention and inclusion of small forest landowners which in big numbers live in the world's forests is an indispensable element for success in the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030.

This is the first year for implementing the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development and the intense follow up to the Paris Climate Accord.

Globally, Local forest smallholder's contributions to and potential benefits from these vitally important political goals cannot be underestimated.

When strong policies and good governance on Land tenure are in place, the most important source of encouragement for family forest owners and farmers to invest in long term activities such as tree growing is in place. Secure tenure is the basic condition for their interest in the management and protection of established trees, and for more trees and larger forest cover.

The green carbon cycle in sustainable management of forests is the world's greatest contribution to three climate actions; the carbon sink in standing trees and long life-span products from wood, the sequestration of CO₂ in growing trees, and substitution of fossil fuel intensive products, by wood based building materials and household goods.

An individual smallholder is in a very weak position in the market place, and in seeking access to services. Therefore, the right to and support of strong collaboration by forest smallholders in the form of their own producer organizations is also an essential condition. Strong, effective producer organizations provide the basis for fair trade, respect from markets and authorities and the strong incentive to plant two trees after harvesting one.

This contribution to climate action, better livelihoods, clean water, erosion control, the possibility to send children to school, and many other benefits for the family, the community and the larger society, very much in the spirit and research of Nobel Laureates Elinor Ostrom and Wangari Maathai, is what IFFA wants to highlight in our discussion on the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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