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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests
– Information from the German delegation, supported by the French and Luxembourg delegations

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note by the German delegation, supported by the French and Luxembourg delegations on the above subject, to be dealt with under 'Any other business' at the Council (Environment) meeting on 19 December 2019.

EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests

- Information from the German delegation -

In July, the Commission presented its communication '**Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests**' (COM(2019) 352 final). This communication was expected and welcomed by all Member States. With its holistic approach, it contributes explicitly to the **overarching goal of conserving forests globally**, and thus to the **implementation of the 2030 Agenda**, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 15 but also other Sustainable Development Goals. The Member States confirm this in the Council conclusions on this subject, emphasising the urgency and committing to supporting swift implementation.

The protection, sustainable management and restoration of forests are of paramount importance. Based on the findings and recent publications of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the protection and conservation of **primary forests**, as mentioned in the Council conclusions, has top priority because of their importance as intact, contiguous habitats, for the protection of biodiversity, as globally significant water reservoirs, as carbon reservoirs and agents in global climate events, but also as irretrievable habitats for indigenous peoples and local communities with spiritual sites and characteristics. Once lost, primary forests cannot be restored.

In addition to the direct drivers of forest loss and forest degradation, the above-mentioned reports also address the indirect drivers. Increasing productivity on existing agricultural land can decrease pressure on forests and other land that should be protected. However, such intensification should be allowed to take place only where it **takes into account the planet's limits and ambitious ecological criteria** in the context of sustainable production and consumption.

Germany stands ready to actively support the implementation of the Council conclusions.