



## OPEN LETTER

### A CALL FOR URGENT ACTIONS TO SAVE NIGERIA'S FORESTS

**TO: DR. MOHAMMAD MAHMOUD, HON. MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT  
CHIEF SHARON O. IKEAZOR, HON. MINISTER OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT**

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*When we drink a glass of water, write in a notebook, take medicine for a fever or build a house, we do not always make the connection with forests. And yet, these and many other aspects of our lives are linked to forests in one way or another. (United Nations)*

Honourable Ministers,

On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of March every year, the world marks the International Day of Forests (IDF). This is a day first proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 to celebrate forests and raise public awareness about their multiple roles and functions. The IDF 2020 theme is “*Forests and Biodiversity.*”

This year's IDF celebration has undoubtedly been overshadowed by the global efforts to control the spread of the new Coronavirus and the highly infectious disease, which it causes, COVID-19. Indeed, Nigeria has not been spared from the pandemic and we must all be unrelenting in following public health advice about how to avoid infections and save precious lives.

Nevertheless, Nigeria's current reality is one of fast-disappearing forests. They may in fact completely disappear given the FAO estimates that in 1990 forests comprised 19% of the nation's total land area but this figure had fallen to just 7% by 2016!

Forest loss on this scale does not bode well for our forest communities as well as all those who depend on these ecosystems for their livelihoods and incomes. Basically, the prospects are of worsening poverty, food insecurity, frequent communal conflicts and the loss of rich biodiversity since forests host large varieties of flora and fauna.

Our forests will also help us to combat climate change, an issue, which the former United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki- Moon, described as the single greatest threat to a sustainable future. This is because forests serve as carbon sinks absorbing emissions of CO<sup>2</sup> that have been implicated in rising global temperatures.

The purpose of this Open Letter is therefore to urge you to prioritize and initiate urgent actions to save Nigeria forests. This can start with the long overdue updating of the National Forestry Policy, a document which has remained unchanged since 2006 when it was introduced.

We need concrete results rather than more statements of intent!

**#IntlForestDay**

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