III. INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE and ENERGY FORUM:

Water Security and COP28

20 December 2023

Zoom ID: 84298744797

Password: 4441428

İsmail BELEN

Vice Chair of the United Nations Forum on Forest (UNFF)

13:30-14:15

COP28 Overview and New Decisions for Mitigation

Thank you Mr. Oğuzhan KINAY for inviting me to speak in this important panel. I also thanks to İstanbul Aydın University and TESPAM for organizing this “III. INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE and ENERGY FORUM”.

Using this opportunity, I would like to great all participants and especially the panelist we are here today.

Allow me to introduce myself very briefly.

I am İsmail Belen, a Forest Engineer and Public Management Expert by training. Currently I am working for the General Directorate of Forest of Türkiye as Chief Inspector. I am the Adviser to the Chamber of Forest Engineers of Türkiye which is an NGO having “public legal entity”.

I am also working for the United Nations Forum on Forest (UNFF) based on New York as member of the Bureau and Vice Chair responsible for Western European and Others Group countries including the USA, Canada, Mexico, Japan, New Zeeland, Australia. The Forum has universal membership, and is composed of all Member States of the United Nations and specialized agencies

Regarding the issue of UNFCCC COP28 and the New Decisions for Mitigation, water security, energy and forest,

I strongly believe that there is very close connection between the forest, water security, energy and climate change.

I also believe that without forests and foresters, tackling with climate related problems is impossible.

Water security is dependent on forests.

**According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations , approximately 75 percent of the world’s accessible** freshwater for agricultural, domestic, industrial and environmental uses comes from forests, with a large number of the world's cities relying on forested watersheds for their water supply.

Forests and trees are essential to maintaining resilient production systems, communities and ecosystems. They are vital to our water supply, providing high quality water resources: they intercept atmospheric moisture, contribute to cloud and rain formation, reduce erosion and recharge groundwater. However, changes in climate and land-use are contributing to altered groundwater and base flows locally, and precipitation regionally. Global hydrosheds - major watersheds - have **experienced 40 percent tree cover loss**, resulting in increased risk to water stress, erosion and forest fires.

**With approximately 80% of the world population facing water insecurity**, the management of forests for water is increasingly important.

Using forests to produce high quality water can cost as low as $2 per person per year. Yet, 75 percent of the world's forests are not managed for water conservation. The relationship between forest and water resources needs to be addressed through integrated management and policies, supported by scientific understanding.

 Regarding the energy and forest issues, this is also another topic for the humanity. I am pleased to inform you that, as the Bureau of the UN Forum on Forest (UNFF18) we convened an event on “Forests, Energy, and Livelihoods” in UNHQ in New York on 4 April 2023.

Some of the findings of this event were as follows: <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/events/unff18-bureau-event-forests-energy-livelihoods/index.html>

Energy poverty remains extensive, with close to 1 billion people without access to electricity predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa – and more than 2.4 billion people still using inefficient and polluting cooking systems, which generate harmful household air pollution responsible for an estimated 3.2 million premature deaths in 2020, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)

It is estimated that about half of the wood extracted from forests is burnt as fuel for energy uses, with the highest share of around 90% in Africa.

Wood fuels are traditionally used for cooking and heating by more than 2 billion people worldwide with limited energy options at the household level. This represents **roughly one-third of the world’s** population and two-thirds of households in Africa. In many regions, the current traditional use of biomass fuels requires women and children to spend many hours per week collecting and carrying biomass that is burned in highly inefficient and polluting stoves.

In Türkiye, in our country, according to the official statistics almost seven people live in and around the forest who are mainly dependent on wood and forest for heating and cooking.

So, I would like to emphasis once more that without forest and forestry tackling with climate change related problems is impossible.

We have to work together.

Thank you.