



सत्यमेव जयते

जयराम रमेश  
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## FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to introduce India's eleventh State of Forest Report. For over two decades, the Forest Survey of India (FSI), as part of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, has been publishing biennial assessments of India's forest cover and the changes therein. These assessments have provided valuable inputs into our forestry sector policy and planning. In keeping with international practice, we have rebranded this publication as the **India State of Forest Report 2009**, reflecting the year of launch rather than the year of the data, which was the earlier practice.

The current report marks a substantive improvement over previous versions. For the first time, India's forests have been mapped into 16 forest type groups; forest and tree cover has been estimated with due consideration to altitudinal levels. The methodology in this report has also been refined to make the output GIS compatible. This has not only enhanced the precision in cartographical presentation but has also made the report more user-friendly. The precision of State-level growing stock estimates has also been improved. I congratulate FSI on these advancements. We must continue to ensure that we remain at the cutting edge of scientific estimation methodologies.

The critical role played by forests in our lives is now increasingly well understood. Forests provide a range of essential ecosystem services. India is one of the 12 mega-biodiverse countries in the world. Forests harbor much of our unique flora and fauna. In addition, over 200 million people in India, mostly poor, are dependent on forests for meeting their subsistence and livelihood needs. We are also in the process of giving land rights to our forest dependent communities and making them partners in our forest conservation efforts. All this shows the central role we are giving our forests in order to ensure our ecological and livelihood security.

It is now a well known fact that forests have the potential to be major carbon sinks. More area under forest cover translates into greater capacity for carbon storage and sequestration, which in turn leads to lesser greenhouse gas emissions. Rejuvenating our forests is therefore a centerpiece of our strategy to combat climate change.

I am, therefore, particularly proud to note a key finding of this report, that India is one of the very few developing countries where the forest and tree cover continues to increase. This clearly reiterates our belief that rapid economic growth need not come at the cost of protection and growth of our core ecological assets.

Our commitment to the forestry sector continues to be strong. India has more than doubled its budget for forestry this year to Rs 8,300 crores (USD 1.85 Bn) and this increase is going to be sustained every year. New programmes to increase the capacity of frontline forestry personnel, improve forestry infrastructure and control forest fires are being implemented. Several initiatives are already underway to facilitate the speedy implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Ensuring that this momentum is maintained will continue to be my priority.

I hope that this report will serve as a useful source of information for policy makers, planners, academicians, civil society groups and all those who are interested in forest management and conservation. As always, I welcome your feedback on this report and on how future editions could be further improved.

Jairam Ramesh