



UN General Assembly declares 2011 as International Year of Forests

NEW YORK, 20 December 2006 – To bolster efforts that will promote sustainably management, conservation and development of forests worldwide, the General Assembly adopted a resolution today declaring the year 2011 as the International Year of Forests.

Forests are an integral part of global sustainable development: forest-related economic activities affect livelihoods of 1.6 billion people worldwide; they provide socio-cultural benefits and are the foundation for indigenous knowledge; and as ecosystems, forests play a critical role in mitigating the effects of climate change and protecting biodiversity.

The International Year of Forests will raise awareness and promote global action to sustainably manage, conserve and develop all types of forests, including trees outside of forests. “This is an open invitation to the world community,” says Pekka Patosaari, Director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat, “to come together and work with governments, international organizations and civil society, to ensure that our forests are managed sustainably for current and future generations.”

Every day, some 350 square kilometers of forest cover are lost worldwide. Conversion to agricultural land, unsustainable harvesting of timber, unsound land management practices, and creation of human settlements are the most common reasons for this loss of forested areas.

Current efforts in forest planting and restoration have helped stem some of the net loss of global forest area, but further global action is needed. “The real challenge is to move beyond raising awareness. Member States of the UN Forum of Forests recently adopted four ambitious Global Objectives on Forests, which included a commitment to reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide. Taking these objectives forward, the Forum is currently in the process of creating an international instrument on forests. However, it is only through broad public participation and by harnessing the skills and practical experiences of forestry practitioners worldwide that we can realize these international objectives and effect change,” says Mr. Patosaari.

Various activities will be organized to celebrate the International Year and foster knowledge exchange on practical strategies to promote sustainable forest management. To help facilitate organization of these activities, governments, regional and international organizations and civil society organizations are expected to create national committees and designate focal points in their respective countries. The UN Forum on Forests Secretariat has been tasked with serving as the focal point for the implementation of the International Year of Forests. “Working on this campaign towards 2011 is an excellent opportunity to strengthen our working relationships with organizations working on forest-related issues within the UN system, in particular FAO, and with other international, regional and national partners working towards sustainable forest management,” says Mr. Patosaari.

An Internet site for the International Year of Forests has been established within the UN Forum on Forests website www.un.org/esa/forests/2011.html.

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