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STATEMENT

BY

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AT THE SPECIAL EVENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO COMMEMORATE THE ADOPTION OF THE NON LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT ON ALL TYPES OF FORESTS

17 DECEMBER 2007
1. Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf the African Group on the occasion of this special event to adopt the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all types Forests.

2. Permit me to express our sincere appreciation to you for organizing this event and, through you, to thank the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat for facilitating the processes leading to the finalization of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all types Forests (NLBI) and the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) describing the main tasks the Forum should be undertaking in the next half of the MDG target date.

3. Mr. President, from time immemorial forests and trees have served as a source of life for all living things on Planet Earth, including human beings. Till today forests continue to contribute immensely to the natural beauty of our planet and the well being of humanity. They are a source of food, energy, building material and medicine to mention but a few.

4. This Special Event is therefore a clear and fitting testimony of our commitment to the prudent husbandry of this precious natural resource – forests.

5. Mr. President, 14 years of constructive engagement following the adoption of Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the General Assembly is witnessing another milestone in the implementation of the international arrangement of forests by endorsing the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all types Forests.

6. This instrument does not only provide a practical framework for sustainable forest management but also stresses the need to strengthen political commitment and collective efforts at all levels and to include forests in national and international development agendas.

7. Forest resources are crucial for poverty reduction and the sustainable development of developing countries especially in Africa where a significant proportion of the continent’s population depends primarily on forests for their livelihood.

8. As home to one of the world’s largest forest reserves, Africa is also a major contributor to the mitigating effect of alarming rate of the global environmental degradation caused by global warming.

9. It is, therefore, imperative to create an enabling environment for investment by facilitating the involvement of the private sector, local communities and other forest users in sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management should and cannot be the sole responsibility of governments alone.
10. Mr. President, efforts by African countries to undertake tree planting as an annual event to sustain multiple uses and, to also act as carbon sink for a global public good, within the framework of the African Green Revolution, have not been adequately supported.

11. In this regard, the Group wishes to call upon partners to support African countries in the campaign to enhance sustainability through the development of nurseries, forestry seed production and forest protection.

12. The Group strongly believes that an elaboration of a framework of principles, policies and regulations to implement the Global Objectives on Forests and to ensure an improved management of forests and sustained production of a wide range of goods and services is not an end in itself.

13. The attainment of those goals and principles must be supported through international cooperation and the provision of appropriate incentives and an effective means of implementation. This, undoubtedly, requires a multi-stakeholder approach aimed at providing additional resources as well as developing innovative mechanism for resources mobilization to facilitate capacity building and the transfer of environmentally sound technology to developing countries for a sustainable forest management (SFM).

14. Mr. President, while welcoming the adoption of the Non Legally Binding Instrument, the African Group wishes reiterate its concern for the decline in the official development assistance (ODA) for sustainable forest management, especially at a time when this common heritage of mankind is under increasing threat of human activities.

15. Clearly, the implementation of the Instrument depends on adequate resource availability. In this respect it is critical for our development partners to fulfill their ODA commitments and to cooperate in the creation of an effective funding mechanism to ensure the implementation of the Non Legally Binding Instrument.

16. The African Group looks forward to a periodic review of implementation and effectiveness of the non-legally binding instrument as part of the efficiency of the international arrangement on forests. But it is crucial to recognize that African Member States will need technical support in monitoring, assessing and reporting on the progress towards achieving the objectives of the Non Legally Binding Instrument.

16. I thank you.