

**Address delivered by Ms. Ursula Heinen,
Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of
Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Germany
on the occasion of**

**The High Level Special Event of the General Assembly to commemorate the adoption
of the Non-legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests
on Monday, 17 December 2007**

Mr. President,
Mr. Minister,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear guests!

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to personally attend this special event.

I am very grateful to the Secretariat and you, Mr. President, for picking up on the idea of organising such a special event.

You provided a worthy framework for the adoption of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all types of forests (NLBI) by hosting this special event.

Some colleagues took the view that the key Climate Change Conference in Bali that recently came to a close far outshines the special event held today.

I believe that this is actually a lucky coincidence.

Climate change has assumed dimensions that force the international community to take action.

The prevention of further deforestation was one of the key topics of the Climate Change Conference. We welcome the results achieved there and hope that the UNFF and the NLBI can contribute to the follow-up work to the forest-related decisions.

Wouldn't it be a good thing if the depletion of forests around the globe for many decades were to get the same attention as climate change in the future!

Yet, silence still reigns and too little attention is devoted to this issue. Policy decisions still hardly take into account the multiple positive benefits of forests and of sustainable forest management for climate protection and the fight against poverty.

A few years ago, the words "forest dieback" caused a similar stir as climate change does today among the public and politicians in Europe and especially in my country. This resulted in extraordinary countermeasures being taken and programmes for forests being adopted.

We may be successful in triggering similar countermeasures on a global level in the years to come.

It is true that the international community has already launched many initiatives.

Germany, too, has been strongly committed to global forest conservation for many years. We are actively engaged in this at various levels.

However, in retrospect, we must say that the outcome has been unsatisfactory.

We came to a crossroads this year: Many people, in Germany too, got tired of the lengthy negotiations in the United Nations Forum on Forests that came to nothing. Much more had to be done.

Against this background, we particularly welcome the fact that the international community represented in the UNFF managed, for the first time and on the basis of the global forest objectives agreed in 2006, to conclude on a coherent and comprehensive international forest instrument here in New York on 27 April 2007. Today, this instrument is due for formal adoption by this body.

Moreover, a concrete multiannual work programme for the UNFF was also adopted.

The adoption of this instrument by the General Assembly is no routine matter. It is a specific procedure chosen in recognition of an instrument that may be non-legally binding – and can therefore not please everybody completely - but nevertheless marks a historic step forward. Today's special event should help to turn the attention of those decision-makers at all levels, whose contribution is indispensable, to this instrument and to activate it. This means to actually use and implement it.

The national level takes centre stage here.

I hope that the new NLBI will give those in charge of forests in their respective countries a more powerful voice and thus provide a strong push towards reduction of deforestation, sustainable forest management and strengthening of forest governance.

I am quite confident that this will, at the same time, increase our chances of intensifying international cooperation and attracting resources for the implementation, including financing from all sources, with the aim of sustainable forest management.

In-depth discussions, specifically on the issue of financing, are on the agenda for 2008.

The instrument will also give international organisations, institutions and instruments, especially the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), within their assigned mandates, new, clearer and common guidance for their forest-related work. The Bali conference already created relevant cross-references in this regard.

I am very glad to see that the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), for example, had already presented initial proposals for pilot measures to assist the implementation of the NLBI. Germany and I think some other countries, too, will support them.

The NLBI has, not least, also given the international community a clearer point of reference. This way, resources can be pooled to a greater extent in the future and multi-sectoral cooperation can be improved.

Australia and Switzerland will organise a Region-Led-Initiative in Geneva on 28-30 January 2008 to deepen the cooperation with the diverse regional processes and organisations. Furthermore, a "Country-Led-Initiative", organised by South Africa and Switzerland, focusing on the subjects of forest governance and decentralisation will be held in Durban, South Africa, on 7-11 April 2008.

These are good initiatives that we greatly appreciate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to say a few words on the UNFF Secretariat.

It has also shouldered great responsibility for the years to come.

I hope that the decisions on its organisational future and the required personnel decisions will shortly be taken and lead to a robust Secretariat.

I can say at this point that Germany will continue to financially support the Secretariat. A corresponding amount has recently been remitted on the occasion of this special event.

My thanks go to the Director of many years, Mr. Pekka Patosaari, who helped to successfully shape the difficult start-up period of the UNFF and the NLBI.

Special thanks in this context are also due to Mr. Hans Hoogeveen, the Chairman of UNFF 7.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Going on from this special event, let us look to the future of forests with keener eyes, tackle the factors that cause their destruction and ensure that the right measures are taken for their conservation at all levels. I hope that this special event will mark the beginning of a turnaround.

Thank you for your attention.