High-Level Special Event, General Assembly Plenary Session
“The Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests –
Heralding a New Era in Implementing Sustainable Forest
Management”

STATEMENT BY

Hans Hoogeveen of the Netherlands, Chairman of UNFF7

NEW YORK, 17 December 2007
Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

Thank you for the honor given to me to address the High-Level Special Event “The Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests – Heralding a New Era in Implementing Sustainable Forest Management”.

I am proud to stand here today with the landmark success of UNFF7 adopted by the General Assembly.
For over a year, we, representatives from all UN regions have worked intensely together in a very constructive atmosphere.
It was a true teamwork effort!

Together we made it happen after 15 years.
It was the dedication of many.
I am particularly grateful for the excellent way we worked together within he Bureau.
I also would like to thank the UNFF Secretariat and Conference Services, in particular Ms. Vivian Pliner, for their outstanding support during UNFF7.
On the occasion of his retirement I am pleased to recognize the valuable and, at times, surprising work of Pekka Patusaari as Head of the UNFF Secretariat.
This work also greatly benefited from the outstanding work of his predecessor, Dr. Jag Maini.
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the imprint of the outcome of the recently concluded Bali Conference on Climate Change fresh in our memories, the timing of this High-Level Event is very well chosen.

Forests are, of course, linked to climate change and the sustainable development agenda.

Let us not forget that the livelihoods of over a billion of the world’s people depending on forests for their daily livelihoods are at stake.

And, let us not forget that around 13 million hectares of forests worldwide are lost every year.

Forests provide great potential in their contribution to our broader societal, developmental and environmental agenda.

After 15 years of intense negotiations, the recently concluded seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests adopted, a Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests and a Multi-Year Program on Forests for the Forum.

The outcome of UNFF-7 is rightly seen as a milestone event.

With this historical achievement we are now better equipped to enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of several Millennium Development Goals.

The linkage between forests and climate change was also identified by the Forum as highly pertinent, but should be viewed in a broader, more integrated approach while focusing on action on the ground.

The Instrument provides a robust framework for action to the sustainability of forests and people around the world in achieving the four Global Objectives on Forests.
Now we have to focus on the implementation of the Instrument. This implementation will directly support the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people in the developing world. But concerted and collective actions, are needed. And they are needed now. With this, words should be translated into concrete action.

_Distinguished Colleagues,_

In furtherance of our collective efforts to achieve the Global Objectives on Forests we, representatives of all nations, should strive to work synergistically and collaboratively. Institutional fragmentation with regard to forest-related issues may lead to incoherence and duplication. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests, formed to support the work of UNFF, provides a crucial pathway for such collaboration.

To ensure more coherence within the UN system with regard to forests Member States, operating within the different Governing Bodies on international forest policies, should convey consistent messages to the relevant international bodies.

In this regard we should take advantage of the recently adopted Instrument to develop and implement a common policy based on forests focusing on actions on the ground.
Distinguished Delegates,

Whilst forests show significant societal and environmental potentials, main players including governments, non-governmental organizations, business and industry sectors are in severe need of increased means of implementation. This includes financial resources, capacity building and technology transfer. To achieve effective solutions to common global problems of alarming rates of deforestation and forest degradation the whole international community needs to pull resources and share knowledge and financial resources.

I am particularly proud that the seventh session of UNFF made a significant step forward to mobilize new and additional financial resources for sustainable forest management from all sources. These new and additional resources for sustainable forest management are of crucial importance to the developing countries who need them most. Also the Bali Action Plan indicated this clearly.

We all have to contribute and we all have to remain actively engaged. In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that the Netherlands, in close cooperation with the United States and other partners, including the World Bank, ITTO and FAO, is preparing to organize a Country Led Initiative on forest finance in mid-2008.

We hope and expect that this CLI on forest finance will provide a sound basis for a successful decision on a financial instrument at UNFF8 in 2009.
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me conclude. The Instrument, adopted here today by the General Assembly, provides us with a unique opportunity to work globally in order to bring desirable change locally on forests.

In support of the implementation of the Instrument it is crucial that political commitment will be maintained and strengthened. It is also highly pertinent that all major groups, including youth, remain engaged in the implementation of the Instrument.

But moreover, we have to ensure the involvement of our next generation of future leaders and decision-makers of the world in the future work of the Forum. To do so, the Netherlands has decided to establish the UNFF-Netherlands Fellowship as a step in that direction. The UNFF-Netherlands Fellowship will provide students from all over the world the opportunity to pursue studies in the field of international forest policy.

The Fellowship aims to contribute not only to the stock of scholarly work in this field, but is also designed to generate energy, passion and new ideas from those people who dare to challenge conventional thinking when it comes to UNFF.
Dear Friends,

Let us not forget, we have only one planet to share, and we must ensure its health and sustainability. Forests are a critical element for that.

Together we can assure that our common aspirations for the implementation of sustainable forest management can become a reality for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren.

Thank You.