



**OPENING REMARKS BY
H.E. MR. SRGJAN KERIM**

**PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

AT THE

**SPECIAL EVENT ON THE ADOPTION OF THE
NON-LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT ON ALL TYPES OF FORESTS**

17 DECEMBER 2007

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me, first of all, to avail myself of the opportunity to thank the Permanent Representative of Portugal, who, on behalf of the European Union, suggested to organize this event for the Adoption of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests.

Forests ought to be protected, as they keep disappearing at an alarming pace. Everyday, the world's forests shrink by some 350 square kilometers – this is equivalent to 3 times the size of Manhattan. Over the past fifteen years, the world lost 3 per cent of its total forest area. The Instrument we have just adopted thus expresses our will to respond to this alarming trend.

But there is much more to this Instrument than just protecting trees. Indeed there is now growing global recognition of the role of forests in stabilizing climate change, and protecting biodiversity and ecosystems. And let us not forget that today, over 1.6 billion people depend on forests for fuel, food, medicine and income. So protecting forests really means fostering sustainable development.

While current efforts have helped many countries stem the tide of centuries of deforestation through forest planting and restoration, the Instrument calls for further global action.

It highlights the adverse impact loss of forest cover has on economies, the environment, livelihoods and cultural heritage of billions of people, but also contains a commitment by Member States to reverse this loss. It emphasizes the need for more effective implementation of sustainable forest management at all levels to address these critical challenges.

Forests have a tremendous role in building the foundation for more sustainable economic and social development. The instrument provides an overarching and comprehensive framework for

sustainable forest management, and focuses global attention on the important role forests play in the broader development agenda.

Sustainable forest management provides a method of balancing the competing priorities, so that forest resources are used at rates that both meet the needs of society while ensuring woodland regeneration, health and vitality.

Excellencies,

The previous session of the General Assembly adopted a resolution (61/193) declaring the year 2011 as the International Year of Forests, to draw attention to efforts that promote sustainable management, conservation and development of forests worldwide.

The Instrument adopted today reflects the strong international commitment to promote on the ground implementation of sustainable forest management through a new, more holistic approach that brings all stakeholders together.

It was a very long process – it took over fifteen years of discussions and negotiations to achieve this, but it was worth the effort. This agreement is the first of its kind. It truly reflects our common commitment to approach the social, economic and environmental aspects of forests in an open, collaborative and forward looking manner.

Thank you./.