Remarks by UNFF-8 Bureau Chairman
H.E. Dr. Boen M Purnama
Secretary-General, Ministry of Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia

On the Occasion of the High Level Special Event
The Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests –
Heralding a New Era in Implementing Sustainable Forest Management

New York, 17 December 2007
Mr. President,
Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year marked the halfway point to reaching the MDGs. According to the 2007 United Nations MDGs report, countries around the world, particularly the poorest ones, have made substantial but uneven progress in achieving the goals. The significant loss of forest in the last 15 years as highlighted in the report signals a critical need for intensified effort. In that context, the forest-dependent communities are among the poorest and most vulnerable. Improving the economic plight of these millions of poor people requires urgent action.

By adopting the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests, the United Nations General Assembly has clearly signalled the strong commitment of its Member States in promoting sustainable forest management worldwide, and has reaffirmed the crucial contribution of forests to the achievement of broader international development goals and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the adoption of the NLBI by the general Assembly today is very timely in light of recent development that took place in Bali last week which confirmed the strategic role of forests. Therefore, now is the right moment to launch a new era in implementing sustainable forest management.

Mr. President,

In my capacity as Chair of the UNFF-8 Bureau, and on behalf of my fellow Bureau members, I would like to assure the President and General Assembly today, that we will certainly do everything within our capacity to carry forth this solemn commitment of the Assembly.

We are well guided by the new work programme of the United Nations Forum on Forests, which complements and contributes to the implementation of the wider development agenda. You will see that the programme neatly links with other sectors and processes, such as climate change, biological diversity, desertification and the internationally-agreed development goals. This cross-sectoral approach goes hand-in-hand with the Forum’s focus on international cooperation, calling for well-coordinated mechanisms connecting actors at all levels – from international to local-level practitioners.

It is against this background that UNFF-8’s theme "Forests in a changing environment; and Means of implementation for sustainable forest management" takes particular significance.

Let me also emphasize that effective implementation of sustainable forest management is critically dependent upon adequate resources, including, in particular, financing and capacity-building. Developing countries are fully aware of the huge challenges at hand, but are often constrained by lack of capacity. Thus, a critical element in the successful
implementation is undoubtedly going to rest on developing a mechanism for financing sustainable forest management.

The Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests clearly identifies the need for additional resources for sustainable forest management from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management. This is an integral component of any concrete and practical approach to address implementation of the instrument.

In this regard, the upcoming eighth session of the Forum in April 2009 will decide upon a global framework for financing sustainable forest management, based on existing and emerging innovative approaches. To assist the work of the Forum, an ad hoc expert group meeting is being convened in 2008, to bring forward proposals for the development of this financial framework.

UNFF-8 will also be coinciding with the completion of the Bali Roadmap negotiations 2009, which will address “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD). The same applies to UNCBD and UNCCD. The Bali Climate Change Conference completed last week, affirmed the urgent need to take further meaningful action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and adopted a work programme for further methodological work. Member countries were encouraged to support capacity building and to undertake efforts, including demonstration activities, to address the drivers of deforestation. This is important to address the needs of local and indigenous communities who depend on forests for their livelihoods. I will ensure that both the UNFF and UNFCCC work synergistically and collaboratively.

Equally important is translating the global forest dialogue into implementation and action on the ground as forests are also closely linked with an issue that is close to our heart at the moment: the climate change. In the context of climate change, forests are indispensable to the global carbon budget, either as sinks or sources of carbon. Our forests function as effective stabilizer of our climate and this unique role of forest in climate stabilization and as a life-support system must be further strengthened in many ways.

Mr. President,

The United Nations Forum on Forests and its Member States are highly committed to promoting implementation of sustainable forest management worldwide, and to making this instrument a truly effective vehicle towards broader recognition of forests as a vital component of global sustainable development.

The upcoming eighth session of the Forum in 2009 provides an opportunity to take the first steps towards the realization of our vision as embodied in the Instrument. Lastly, I wish to reiterate our Bureau’s strong commitment and we stand ready to work with all countries in making our first step a success a great success.

Thank you.