



## **Strengthening cooperation with the United Nations Forum on Forests**

Remarks by the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat  
Agenda Item 4.13

Bonn, Germany  
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Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat attaches great importance to enhanced cooperation among secretariats of forest-related conventions, institutions, and organizations, and expresses its appreciation to the Secretariat of the CBD for this opportunity to address the Conference of the Parties on the occasion of its ninth meeting.

As you well know, forests cover one third of the world's land mass and constitute the largest terrestrial ecosystems and the richest source of such biological diversity. They provide a wide range of economic, social, cultural and environmental services, including wood and non-wood forest products, protection of other natural resources in particular water and soil, and contribute to local and global climate mitigation.

Unsustainable management of forests and competing land uses, such as large scale agriculture, aggravated by fires and airborne pollution, have resulted in extensive and rapid deforestation and forest degradation, contributing further to local and trans-boundary environmental deterioration. Although progress has been made in reversing deforestation in some areas, and in further applying sustainable management of forests, deforestation remains a critical challenge for the international community.

The UNFF, an inter-governmental body with universal membership, is mandated within the UN to discuss forest policy issues in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Last December a milestone was reached in the Forum's work when the UN General Assembly, during its 62nd Session, adopted the Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on All Types of Forests. The Instrument provides a framework, setting out national policies and measures, to be used to achieve sustainable forest management, most of which build upon and further strengthen the importance of IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, as well as previous UNFF decisions. In addition, it further defines measures of international cooperation and means of implementation. The Instrument also includes four Global Objectives on Forests with which countries have committed to work globally, regionally and nationally to achieve progress by 2015.

Because of its integrative nature, the Instrument does not address the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) or its members explicitly, however, most of the stated actions relate directly to ongoing activities of the CPF and its members, and further suggest areas of potential increased collaboration. For this reason, the Instrument calls on Member States to support the CPF "to

develop and implement joint initiatives”<sup>1</sup>, and, as members of the governing bodies of CPF member organizations, to “help ensure that the forest-related priorities and programmes of the members of the Partnership are integrated and mutually supportive”<sup>2</sup>.

On its substantive side, the NLBI addresses a very broad range of issues related to sustainable forest management. Among these are thematic issues such as forest law enforcement and governance, international trade in forest products, conservation and protection of forests; science and research, monitoring, assessment and reporting, means of implementation, public awareness and education, and major stakeholder participation, including indigenous and local communities, private sector and industry. Additionally, the Instrument promotes efforts to enhance the contribution of forests to the Millennium Development Goals, in particular with respects to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. Opportunities to develop synergies and to integrate national forest programmes to broader sustainable development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, for sustainable forest management are also a pivotal feature of the NLBI.

Madam Chair,

Carrying these activities forward requires strong collaboration and active support at all levels. With this aim, cooperation between the Secretariat’s of the UNFF and CBD has been proactive, and consistent with each ones respective mandates. Among the activities in reach for the preparations of the themes under “Forests in a Changing Environment”, which constitute a prominent part of the Forum’s Eighth Session, to be held in April 2009, I would like to highlight the close cooperation fostered with the CBD Secretariat. A collective approach is pulling members together to contribute on all three themes, through the elaboration of background analyses, namely on: 1) reversing the loss of forest cover, preventing forest degradation in all types of forests and combating desertification, including in low forest cover countries; 2) forests and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas; and 3) forests and climate change. This will also help to inform the UNFF 8 Secretary-General Reports.

Cooperation with other stakeholders has also been a key focus. As part of our outreach and information-gathering activities for the Reports of the Secretary-General on forests and desertification and land degradation, forests and biodiversity, and forests and climate change, the Forum Secretariat is hosting a series of three web-forums to enable open discussion and inputs on these issues. The first in this series on reversing the loss of forest cover was launched this month, and will remain active until 30 May 2008. The next web-forum, in June, will feature “Forests and Biodiversity Conservation, including Protected Areas”, and then in July, “Forests and Climate Change”. We hope that all major stakeholders and interested actors will take advantage of this opportunity to voice their opinions, disseminate key messages and share their valuable experiences on the themes. Links to the web forums can be found on the UNFF website.

Madam Chair,

Common agenda items in the Forum’s new programme of work, such as those which call for CPF, major group and regional and sub-regional inputs are also of a key essence. With respect to these, it is important to mention that over the last few years, the Forum has significantly increased its cooperation and interactions at the regional and sub-regional levels. Even before the UNFF was established, in 2000, there was universal agreement among member States of the critical role that regions play in achieving sustainable forest management. This view was further articulated

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<sup>1</sup> NLBI paragraph 7(s)

<sup>2</sup> NLBI paragraph 7(r)

through the introduction of the Forum's six principal functions, in 2000<sup>3</sup>, and moreover with ECOSOC Resolution 2006/49 which added to these six functions, three new ones, explicitly strengthening the Forum's regional component. Accordingly in Resolution 7/1, the Forum invited regional and sub-regional entities to provide substantive inputs on activities and discussions linked to agenda items of future Forum sessions. These inputs will be a new feature of the forthcoming Eighth Session in 2009.

Mr. Chair,

To close I wish to mention the timely opportunity that the International Year of Biodiversity (2010) and the International Year of Forests (2011) offer to plan joint activities between our Secretariat's, in collaboration with other members of the CPF. We must approach these milestone events in a manner that best serves all people and draws better perceptions on the social, environmental and economic services and benefits that forests and related biodiversity provides. Harmonized activities should also focus on coherent approaches to help boost efforts in achieving the Global Objectives on Forests in 2015 and the 2010 Biodiversity Target.

With respect to this, we suggest that Annex 1 of Document UNEP/CBD/COP/9/25/ADD1 could also list the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNFF, to be held at the UN headquarters in NY, from 20 April to 1 May 2009, as a significant occasion to promote the joint collaboration in preparation of both International Years. Furthermore, as we approach these milestone events, we also consider that the involvement of the UNFF Secretariat could also be included among the inter-agency task force contained in that same document under paragraph 42.

In moving towards our objectives and goals, we can anticipate constructive outputs from our joint work and more opportunities for collaboration. Together we can continue to face the challenges of our changing environment in a spirit of constructive partnership.

Thank you for your attention.

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<sup>3</sup> ECOSOC Resolution E/2000/35