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**STATEMENT BY
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TO THE

**SPECIAL EVENT OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
TO COMMEMORATE THE ADOPTION OF THE
NON-LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT ON ALL TYPES OF FORESTS**

UNHQ, New York
17 December 2007

Mr. President,

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

By adopting this global Instrument on All Types of Forests, the United Nations is strongly building on the previous commitments on forests. The Instrument has a strong focus on national level implementation and international cooperation, and it provides a clear articulation of Sustainable Forest Management as the overarching principle for forest policy at both the national and international levels.

It incorporates the four shared Global Objectives on Forests, aiming to reverse the loss of forest cover, improve the contribution of forests to local livelihoods, increase the area of sustainably managed and protected forests, and enhance financial support for Sustainable Forest Management.

The Instrument recognizes the role of forests in conservation of biodiversity and other environmental services, but puts a strong emphasis on people and communities that depend on forests for their income and livelihoods. This is a paradigm shift - meaning, that through the Sustainable Forest Management concept, policymakers can better judge the value of their forests, in a way that ensures long-term health and sustainability of this important natural resource.

Distinguished delegates,

Almost all recent success stories of restoring the world's forests are, in one way or another, based on better recognition of the needs and actions of local peoples, their ownership and access rights and ancient knowledge of indigenous tribes and communities.

The causes of deforestation and forest degradation are complex, and are often manifestations of utilization of natural resources without proper management and regeneration activities. Sustainable Forest Management provides a method of balancing multiple diverging priorities.

Today, forests are disappearing, not only because of a lack of knowledge on how to manage and conserve them, but also because we have not been able to establish national or international regimes or support mechanisms which would directly support people's ownership and motivation to use the forest patrimony for the benefit of themselves and the rest of society.

Mr. President,

Sustainable Forest Management contributes to society in a wide range of ways. A central part of the new forest policy must be to identify forest-related activities as a priority in Poverty Reduction Strategy processes. To achieve this, national forest programmes, or similar frameworks, must include

clear statements on the costs and benefits of the forest sector, explaining why forest-related activities are a priority and why external funding is justified. In addition to seeking contributions from national budgets and ODA, there is a need to take full advantage of other sources of funding. The contribution that an efficient forest fiscal system could make to poverty reduction is more than considerable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The message from Bali is also very clear. The world's forests are integrally linked with climate change. On the one hand, our forests are threatened by climate change, but when sustainably managed, they play multiple positive roles in its mitigation.

At the same time, they embody a major potential energy source. Forests are the largest pool of terrestrial carbon. Forest products store carbon for long periods, and energy from renewable wood sources can be a substitute for non-renewable energies. Achieving this potential without sacrificing the other elements of Sustainable Forest Management represents a major policy challenge.

The world's forests have the capacity to meet global demand for forest products, but the demand is not evenly distributed. There are local and regional scarcities, which put a lot of pressure on natural forest. Demand for wood continues to grow, and we can expect it to do so, for as long as we can predict the future.

The UN Forum on Forests is working to respond to these challenges supported by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and other forest-related processes, institutions, and instruments at all levels.

Mr. President,

We can forge ahead, secure in the knowing that we work not in isolation, but as an integrated, challenged, yet energized force for change - a diverse group, yet unified with the one, overarching and common goal of doing the absolute best we can for forests and people everywhere. Let this Instrument be only the beginning.

Thank you.