

Check against delivery



**Statement by
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TO THE

**THE WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
TROPICAL FOREST INVESTMENT FORUM**

28-30 August 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Honourable Ministers,
Mr. Manoel Sobral, Executive Director, ITTO,
Distinguished expert participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this morning, in the beautiful city of Accra, and I feel honoured to be given an opportunity to address this meeting of experts from the West and Central Africa region, on behalf of the UN Secretariat.

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank all the sponsors and contributing institutions of the meeting, in particular, the Government of Ghana, the ITTO, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the FAO for organizing this important event, which addresses one of the most critical issues of sustainable forest management.

Mr. Chairman,

We all know that the management, conservation and sustainable development of tropical forests require considerable financial and technical resources. Adequate funding is a prerequisite for forests and their owners to be able to deliver a host of goods and services in a sustainable manner, both within and outside of borders where forests exist. Financing is not just an issue for forest owners or individual governments, but also for the wider group of stakeholders, including domestic and international private sector actors, the donor community and the general public.

This regional forum will prove to be an ideal opportunity to discuss issues and opportunities for investment in natural tropical forests in West and Central Africa. As a region with the most diverse of forest resources, invaluable to humankind and to our planet Earth, the discussions here would be beneficial not only to this region, but also to the entire world.

Mr. Chairman,

The issue of forests has been a priority on international political agendas for the past 15 years. The alarming rate of deforestation and forest degradation and their transboundary effects, growing international trade in forest products and services, and the concerns of stakeholders, particularly forest-dependent communities, has led the international community to discuss and to develop coherent, holistic forest policies.

Established seven years ago by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), as the central body of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF), aims to promote sustainable forest management of all types of forests worldwide, and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end. The importance of the forest issue is highlighted by the fact that, besides the General Assembly, this is the only body within the UN system with universal membership of all the Member States. The Forum is also supported by a unique interagency cooperation arrangement, known as the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), consisting of 14 international organizations, institutions and instrument secretariats, including the UNFF Secretariat, which is a Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman, 2007 is *the* crucial year for the forest community, due to the successful conclusion of the seventh session of the UN Forum on Forests, in April this year. UNFF7 successfully concluded negotiations on the Non-legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on all types of forests, the Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPOW) for the period 2007–2015, and decided to

establish a process, to be concluded by 2009, toward the establishment of a forest financing mechanism for all types of forests.

I do not need to convince you, but the Instrument on all types of forests really will be a key vehicle for translating policies and decisions, developed and adopted by the Forum, into national and international actions for achieving sustainable forest management and the Global Objectives on Forests. For this meeting, Global Objective 4 is of particular relevance, aimed at reversing the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management, and to mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

In the field of finance, the Instrument calls for, among other things, creating enabling environments to encourage private sector investment, as well as investment by and involvement of local and indigenous communities, developing financing strategies that outline the short-, medium- and long-term financial planning for achieving SFM, and developing and establishing positive incentives, in particular for developing countries, as well as for countries with economies in transition, to reduce the loss of forests.

The new Multi-year Programme of Work of the Forum reflects the broadened mandate given to the UNFF through ECOSOC resolution 2006/49. The MYPOW is comprehensive, with a focus on contributing to and reviewing the implementation of the Instrument and the progress toward achieving the Global Objectives on Forests, pressing and emerging issues of sustainable forest management, and with links to several other sectors and processes, such as climate change, biological diversity, desertification and internationally-agreed development goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The agreement on developing and considering for adoption a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework for all types of forests, as it is called, is truly a landmark decision. This issue has been and will remain a center of gravity in the international negotiations on forests; it is also an essential component to making the NLBI operational, and therefore will absolutely be one of the most critical topics at UNFF8 in 2009. A successful resolution on the establishment of a funding arrangement for sustainable forest management in 2009 would significantly boost the progress toward SFM, and further intensify international cooperation.

It is needless to emphasize just how significantly meetings like this one can contribute to the preparations for the Eighth session of UNFF, in particular, on its consideration of the issue of financial resources and investment. Exchange of experiences during the meeting, successes (and failures), innovative partnerships among governments, the private sector and civil society and lessons learned would be invaluable to the broader audience.

A better understanding of the complex dynamics of investment decisions from a wide range of parties, and the conventional and emerging markets for products and services from tropical forests - including payment for environmental services, carbon sequestration and recreation - would certainly facilitate the mobilization of additional financial resources for SFM, including international cooperation.

In this regard, the Government of Ghana and other sponsoring Governments and organizations deserve our sincere gratitude for convening this forum.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to participating in a highly productive discussion, and I wish you all success with this very important meeting.

Thank you.