

**Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests
Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)**

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Statement by the Mr. Pekka PATOSAARI, Director of the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, to the Second Summit of Heads of State of Central Africa on the Sustainable Management of the Ecosystems of the Congo Basin

Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

4-5 February 2005

Monsieur le Président de la République du Congo,
Messieurs les Chefs d'Etats des pays de l'Afrique Centrale,
Messieurs les Ministres,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Je suis très honoré et heureux d'être parmi vous, aujourd'hui, à la belle capitale de Brazzaville, pour participer du deuxième Sommet des Chefs d'Etat de l'Afrique Centrale sur la gestion durable des écosystèmes du Bassin du Congo.

Il y a presque un an je suis venu à la République du Congo pour participer de la Conférence Internationale sur le Transfert des Technologies Ecologiquement Rationnelles et le Renforcement des Capacités pour la Gestion Durable des Forêts, fruit de la vision inspirée du Ministre de l'Economie Forestière et l'Environnement congolais, Monsieur Henri DJOMBO. A l'occasion, cette ville a été nommée par les participants de la Conférence comme Brazzaville, la forestière. Il est très approprié, alors, que ce sommet ait lieu ici, au bord de ce puissant fleuve, dans cette ville de tradition forestière.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for your kind invitation, which provided me with the opportunity to come back to your country in order to attend this very important meeting. Once again, Central Africa has shown to the world how forests can be instrumental in fostering regional cooperation. I am sure that your example will inspire other regions and, in that regard, I would like to invite you all to come to New York next May and inform the Fifth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests of your achievements.

Let me also thank all the partners of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. As Mr. Secretary-General has noted, this very important initiative has brought together the countries of the region and other governmental and non-governmental partners which share the same

purpose: the promotion of the sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests. The partnership has now reached a very crucial moment, with the analysis of the content and the financing needs for the implementation of the “Plan de Convergence” prepared by the Conference of Ministers for Forests of Central Africa, the COMIFAC, and I look forward to see the next concrete steps.

Monsieur le Président de la République,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, the United Nations Forum on Forests – UNFF - was established in October 2000 to facilitate progress toward sustainable forest management and to strengthen political commitment to this end. Its substantive scope covers the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. In this regard, the United Nations Forum on Forests is well suited for intergovernmental deliberations and policy development on all these issues. As a high-level, open-ended body under the United Nations Economic and Social Council, it has the ability to pull together various forest-related international and regional processes, institutions and instruments and integrate all of these pieces into a unified, global vision with achievable targets and into appropriate international guidance for action.

As I mentioned before, the Fifth Session of UNFF will take place from the 16th to the 27th of May 2005, at the United Nations Headquarters and will decide on important issues, in particular the future of the international arrangement on forests. In this session there will be a ministerial segment, which will be held on May 25th and 26th. I would like to welcome/invite active participation of a large number of decision makers from Africa in the ministerial segment; your points of view will certainly enrich the discussions and contribute to reaching an agreement on the future actions on forests.

The international consensus on ways to promote sustainable forest management would be a critical means for eradicating poverty, significantly reducing deforestation, preventing the loss of forest biodiversity, land and resource degradation, as well as for improving food security, access to safe drinking water and affordable. Because of the linkages between the forest sector and others, the achievement of sustainable forest management world-wide is crucial for sustainable development. Thus, action is needed at all levels to enhance political commitment to achieve sustainable forest management by endorsing it as a priority on the domestic and international political agenda.

As emphasized in the Monterrey Consensus, good governance is essential for sustainable development. High-level regional conferences on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in Africa, Asia and Europe have explored ways for governments, non-governmental organizations and private sector to combat illegal logging together. FLEG processes have been instrumental in exchanging best practices on national and sub-regional levels.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In recent years, several important and exciting developments have been taking place in the African continent towards collective actions. At the Durban Summit of July 2002, the African Union was launched, thus opening a new chapter in the history of the continent. In

parallel, African leaders have been promoting the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which has attracted considerable international attention and promises of support from the donor community.

In the domain of forestry, Africa is also innovating. In this regard, we have witnessed the historic summit that took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in March 1999. Its final result, the Yaoundé Declaration, set forth firm political commitments and created COMIFAC in order to coordinate and see to its implementation. It also served as a basis for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.

This level of regional accomplishment, achieved by our host, the Republic of Congo, together with Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, is extra-ordinary in any domain, but it is even more so when one takes into account the complexities in the forestry sector. You may rest assured that the discussions and development in this Summit are being observed with great interest and appreciation throughout the world!

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very much looking forward to our discussions in this Summit. We have a real chance to achieve progress in the implementation of sustainable forest management policies, as well as in improving regional cooperation through forestry. If we are able to achieve those goals in the Congo Basin region, I believe we have a strong case in further promoting them in other areas. The UNFF Secretariat is fully supportive of this important endeavour. So let's get our job done and make sure that Africa teaches this lesson of cooperation and understanding to the world!

Merci beaucoup de votre attention.