

**Country Led Initiative in Support of
United Nations Forum on Forests**



**FUTURE INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT
ON FORESTS**

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Hon Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you in beautiful Guadalajara for this workshop on the future of the international arrangement on forests. I would like to thank the Governments of Mexico and the United States for co-hosting and several other member States that have so generously provided funding for this initiative, which responds to the proposal made at last September's ad hoc expert group meeting for continued dialogue on possible options in advance of the fifth session of UNFF.

As you will recall, in September the ad hoc expert group had three main tasks to further build on. First, it reviewed relevant experiences of existing regional and international legally binding and non-legally binding instruments and processes relevant to forests, analyzing complementarities, gaps and duplications; part of this task was to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current situation, and to identify what needs to be improved. Second, it considered other outcomes of the international arrangement on forests, while recognizing that the full review at UNFF5 was to still to come. The focus here was on catalysts and obstacles – and how changes concerning the international framework might promote catalysts and remove obstacles. And third, a balanced range of options, for consideration at UNFF5.

I would like to encourage you to now take this opportunity to deepen and expand each others' understanding of these matters, as well as of the expectations, goals and ambitions for the future of the international arrangement on forests. I hope that your deliberations here will facilitate towards firm decisions at UNFF5 on several important issues, namely:

- On the review on progress made in the implementation of the UNFF Multiyear Programme of Work and Plan of Action and on this basis consider future actions needed. This includes progress made toward SFM at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by Governments, regional and international organizations, institutions and instruments; second
- On the review of effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. IAF meaning here: UNFF supported by CPF. The review should also address the institutional framework of the United Nations Forum on Forests, including its position within the United Nations system. The international arrangement on forests has clear objective, purpose and six functions. The ECOSOC resolution 2000/35 does not specify the duration of the arrangement, but makes clear that it should be dynamic and adapt to evolving conditions; and third
- To consider, on the basis of the assessment on the progress made at the national, regional and global levels, with a view to recommending to the Economic and Social Council and through it to the General Assembly, the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests. This process could develop the financial provisions to implement any future agreed legal framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is crucial to remember that we don't work in isolation. Sustainable forest management contributes to society in a wide range of ways, and poverty reduction is at the heart of the challenges facing sustainable forest management. Finding solutions to alleviate poverty will be crucial for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and is central to our work too.

The follow-up of the Millennium Declaration requires clear strategy and firm actions. We need a sound understanding of the benefits that forests can offer to current and future generations. UNFF has a very opportune time to clarify its priorities for the coming years. Some of these priorities may include:

- Arresting deforestation and reversing forest degradation - and promoting restoration of all types of forests;
- Building adequate capacity and financial incentives;
- Implementing National Forest Programmes or similar strategies and linking forest management to Poverty Reduction Strategies;
- Increasing the contribution of forests and trees to human health, soil and water conservation;
- Promoting an effective institutional framework that contributes to conflict prevention, post-conflict resolution, reconstruction and peace-building;
- Ensuring that forest products and services come from sustainably managed sources; and
- Promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns, fair and equitable benefit-sharing and fair trade.

These are just a few examples of possible objectives and priorities that could help to build a coherent, responsive agenda for the UNFF, in years to come.

I believe that, right supportive policies and enabling environments will help to create much needed forest markets and revenue from forest products and services, especially in developing countries. Important underlying factors for healthy local and national economies include the strengthening of institutional capacity for good practices and governance as well as the provision of better opportunities for education and training. Forest policy objectives should also be supported by efficient and effective land tenure systems and access to forest resources. These are crucial for local and indigenous communities and can provide an economic incentive for sustainable forest management.

But none of these pieces can come together without good governance and law enforcement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is still a need for more holistic thinking on the interaction and linkages between people and our precious natural resources. Forests are deeply entwined with many sectors of society and their management requires coordinated efforts and inter-sectoral approaches. There is a need for a broader and meaningful interaction between various stakeholder groups and between those sectors that influence forests and the forest-dependent poor.

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 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.

I hope that you would look into these and other underlying factors, clarify issues, explore innovative ways and means, and most importantly, produce reasoned recommendations that would help UNFF reach to the best decisions - for forests and for people. I wish you a very fruitful and successful meeting here in Gaudalajara. Let me once again extend my thanks to the supporting Governments and to the host countries for making this country-led initiative possible.

I thank you for your attention.