



**Nairobi Preparatory Meeting for Selected African
Delegations to UNFF5
4- 6 April, 2005 Nairobi, Kenya**



**Pekka Patosaari
Director
Secretariat of United Nations Forum on Forests**

Honourable Minister, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to, first and foremost, thank the Swedish Government for generously providing funding for this meeting, as well as AFORNET for organizing it. I would also like to thank individuals and organizations involved in the Sustainable Forest Management project for their effort, which led to the emergence of an African constituency, the results of which are self evident, including this meeting. I want to offer special thanks to Prof Fred Owino, our facilitator, and I would also like to commend all of you for focusing your energies this week on the future of the International Arrangement on Forests.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent positive forces converging in the African region, including the winning of the Nobel Peace Prize and the landmark signing of the regional agreement on conservation and sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems, show promise for the future of African forests. It is therefore imperative to promote and implement sustainable forest management so that forests and trees can deliver their full potential and we all can enjoy the benefits over the long term.

As I said before, UNFF will hold its fifth session in New York from 16 – 27 May, when the member States will address very important issues, in particular the review of the effectiveness of the International Arrangements on Forests, as well as a review of progress and consideration of future action. In view of that, it is critical that, as a continent, Africa has a position on what Africa wants for Africa.

We, therefore, appreciate the lessons learned from the SFM Project to further the interest of Africa's participation at UNFF sessions. We strongly commend the project for coordinating African countries' approach to UNFF sessions, as well as to the global debates on the forest agenda. It is important for Africa to speak with one voice.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we look to future of the International Arrangement on Forests, we should never forget that forests do not exist outside of the context of human needs and human communities. Sustainable forest management contributes to society in a wide range of ways. Reducing poverty is not only a moral imperative; it is a priority for sustainable forest management. Furthermore, finding solutions to alleviate poverty is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, it is clear that, in the future, mobilizing resources for sustainable forest management will require concrete actions that produce compelling results, not merely high sounding rhetoric.

Later this year, the General assembly of the United Nations will host a summit on the follow-up of the Millennium Declaration, issue that requires clear strategy and firm actions. We need a sound understanding of the benefits that forests can offer to current and future generations. In this regard, we are happy to note that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, echoed this sentiment in the recently released report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all (A/59/2005). The report, among other issues, stresses the importance of better resource management and encourages countries, for instance, to adopt time bound environmental targets, particularly for such priorities as forest replanting, and calls the attention of

member States for the need to strengthen regional and global efforts for many environmental priorities, such as forests.

The UNFF has a very real chance of contributing to these efforts in the coming years. In this regard some of the priorities for UNFF 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.

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.

We live in a time of great endeavour in which we are all trying to build a more sustainable, prosperous and compassionate society that is in harmony with our environment. Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, both the environmental and social goals can be met in a win-win picture around forests. I hope that this gathering inspires us all to play our part and to ensure that the International Arrangement on Forests is responsive to the future. My best wishes for a very productive meeting.

I look forward to seeing you all at UNFF5 in New York in May

Thank you