



Strengthening Regional Interaction in the UNFF

Opening Remarks by the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat at SBSTTA 13

Side Event on Regional Forest Cooperation- Reaching the 2010 Biodiversity Target and the UNFF Global Objectives on Forests by 2015

**Rome, Italy
19 February 2008**

Mr. Moderator, Distinguished Experts and Colleagues,

It is with pleasure that the Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) joins the CBD Secretariat and FAO, as co-hosts of this unique side event, to share perspectives of the Forum on regional forest cooperation and interaction. In the same way, we look forward to working with regional and sub-regional organizations to find ways to bring their perspectives and substantive inputs, to global processes, in a way that promotes even greater exchange between levels.

Feedback from participants on how they perceive implementation - both challenges in translating high-level policy into action and, opportunities in developing synergies and integrating efforts to broader development strategies to achieve Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) - will be pivotal to this side event and our future work.

Mr. Moderator,

Regional interaction and cooperation has risen considerably within the international forest policy process. Even before the UNFF was established, there was universal agreement among member States of the critical role that regions play to achieve SFM. Through the introduction of the Forum's six principal functions, in 2000, this view was further articulated.¹

During the 1st five years of UNFF, interaction significantly expanded. The introduction of regional panel events and workshops displayed experiences and realities of implementation as well as the challenges and helped to build a better understanding of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. Workshops also focused on positioning negotiations for Forum sessions and developing a basis for cooperative work between countries and civil society. The Forum also established networks with regional and sub-regional organizations, backing regional accreditation in the work of the Forum. Furthermore, information exchange and awareness building, at the regional level, emerged with a strong focus on linking SFM as a contributor to achieve the MDGs.

Given the results, the Forum at its 6th and 7th sessions adopted a stronger mandate through 2015, gearing Forum discussions more prominently at regional level actions. Among the three new principal functions

¹ ECOSOC Resolution E/2000/35

of 2006, the third one calls on the Forum to strengthen interaction with regional and sub-regional entities in order to facilitate cooperation and implementation of SFM.

A number of other important factors put substantial emphasis on using regional cooperation to promote and advance SFM. Of these, I wish to mention the approach set out in the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests (NLBI). Drawing from its framework, under International Cooperation and Means of Implementation, there are 6 measures concerning regional action. The focus is on: forest law enforcement and good governance; capacity building; international technical and scientific cooperation, including South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation; and forestry research and development. Thus, implementation of the Instrument will be successful if undertaken in partnership with all, including regional and sub-regional organizations.

Adding to this is the Forum's new Multi Year Programme of Work (Resolution 7/1), which invites regional and sub-regional entities to provide substantive inputs on activities and discussions linked to agenda items of future Forum sessions.

Mr. Moderator:

The Forum's 8th session in 2009 will address thematic issues that relate to priorities common across most regions. Firstly, the focus is on forest issues linked to the three Rio Conventions. Addressing forests and biological diversity, including protected areas, is particularly relevant to our Secretariat's cooperation with CBD and the 2010 Biodiversity Targets. Closer cooperation with UNCCD on the issue of deforestation and the UNFCCC on climate change – SFM developments are also in effect.

Several regional forest meetings focusing on these global thematic issues are in course this year. In this regard, devising regional strategies to harmonize activities and help boost country efforts in achieving the Global Objectives on Forests and the 2010 Biodiversity Target is worth considering.

Secondly, a critical task relates to the consideration of proposals for a voluntary global financing mechanism for all types of forests. Inputs from regional and sub-regional organizations to the Forum's preparatory work on funding matters are also encouraged.

Contributions will obviously vary among the regions. Such variety, however, contains great value and indicates the importance in achieving SFM, via different ends. Furthermore, engaging the CPF and a wide spectrum of stakeholders in regional discussions will also provide an important component to our collective work.

The Regional Led Initiative in support of the UNFF, co-organized by the government of Australia and Switzerland, last month also expressed this view. The Initiative provided a 1st step in discussing regional matters in preparation for the Forum's next session. The summary report of the meeting will soon be available on the UNFF website.

The opportunity to make progress on SFM in a collective manner is ahead of us. When moving forward, we should not lose sight of our common objective in facilitating implementation.

Thank you for your attention.