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**STATEMENT BY  
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to the Expert Meeting of the Forestry Agency

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you in beautiful Tokyo for this Expert Meeting at the Forestry Agency of Japan. I would like to thank the Forestry Agency and the Government of Japan for hosting this initiative.

We all know that now, more than ever, there is a need for the continuation and strengthening of the high-level forest policy dialogue and development mechanism within the United Nations system. We should always keep in mind the plight of more than 1.6 billion people around the world, who depend, to varying degrees, on forests, for their livelihoods and their subsistence. They should be the main focus of our high-level forest policy mechanism and they are the people affected by it. I'm sure you would agree with me that concrete actions are needed right away to improve the quality of life of those forest-dependent people and communities. On the other hand, millions of hectares of forests are being lost every year due to deforestation and forest degradation, affecting everybody who lives both near and far from forests. There is an urgent need to decide on policies, such as maintaining forest cover, the introduction and establishment of sustainable forest management, as well as on the combined operations of low-impact harvesting, restoration at the landscape level and conservation efforts.

I cannot stress enough the urgent need for action and the fact that Sustainable Forest Management is the best approach to successfully tackle our current challenges. We need to continue to develop international policies, backed by appropriate programmes and adequate means of implementation, to ensure a sustainable future for our children and grandchildren. Future generations have the same rights that we do for access to forests and the benefits derived from them. Moreover, management and conservation policies and programmes on forests should be clearly linked and aligned with poverty-reduction strategies and integrated national development plans.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After two weeks of intense negotiations, the Sixth Session of the UN Forum on Forests, on Friday, 24 February 2006, reached an agreement on the future direction of international forest policy.

The Forum set a positive tone on efforts to strengthen international and national-level collaboration. The Forum, which includes every Member State of the United Nations, has been in existence for five years. During the two-week session, the Forum's mandate was renewed for another nine years until the year 2015. The UN Forum on Forests demonstrated the Member States' strong political commitment to sustainable forest management, and the Forum agreed that it would conclude and adopt a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests at its seventh session next year.

The following elements contain some of the key policy issues emanating from the Sixth Session of the Forum, building strongly upon ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35, by which the UN Forum on Forests was established as a high-level forum within the UN system.

In order to advance sustainable forest management, curb deforestation and enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of international development goals, the Forum agreed on four shared Global Objectives on Forests, as a clear guidance on the future work of the international arrangement on forests. The four Global Objectives seek to:

- Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management (SFM), including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation;
- Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people;
- Increase significantly the area of sustainable managed forests, including protected forests, and increase the proportion of forest products derived from sustainably managed forests; and
- Reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management and mobilize significantly-increased new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

The draft resolution builds on ECOSOC resolution 2000/35, adding three more principle functions of the United Nations Forum on Forests to those six, already identified before. The new principle functions include: Enhancement of the contribution of forests to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including MDGs, encouragement and assistance to countries to implement forest conservation strategies and increase the area of forest under SFM, and strengthen interaction between UNFF and regional and sub-regional organisations and major groups.

Major tasks lying ahead for the UN Forum on Forests in the immediate future are reaching an agreement at the seventh session on a non-legally binding instrument on

forests and developing a multi-year programme of work on the basis of the Resolution. An open-ended intergovernmental working group will be convened to facilitate the preparation of an instrument for the seventh session.

The draft resolution promotes wider participation and greater relevance to specific situations of countries, and the member States agreed on a greater regional focus in its work. How to organize the regional focus will be a core issue when developing the multi-year programme of work (MYPOW).

The draft resolution demonstrates a strong commitment to strengthen the means of implementation, particularly funding mechanisms, capacity building and other means of implementation to facilitate the action on the ground for sustainable forest management. The agreement contains a number of recommendations, ranging from strengthening aid flows and GEF funding for sustainable forest management, as well as those generated from within the forest sector. This is a critical area not so clearly articulated in previous resolutions.

This agreement will provide the UN Forum on Forests a unique mandate, requesting it to provide clear guidance to the members of the voluntary Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as to improve enhanced collaboration and policy and programme coordination, and further develop close partnership with the multi-lateral environmental agreements.

The draft resolution also sets the second review of the arrangement nine years away, in 2015. This underlines the very nature of the UN Forum on Forests as the central UN policy-making body in the field of economic and social affairs, including the environmental aspects and functions of forests. This is the longest continuing commitment that has been made toward implementing sustainable forest management within this UN body.

To support a stronger international forest regime, the member States of the UN Forum on Forests also reaffirmed their strong commitment to forest law enforcement and governance. At the sixth session of the Forum, countries were urged to develop and implement plans to address illegal practices and illegal international trade in forest products through the promotion of forest law enforcement and governance. Issues of land tenure schemes and their relationship to sustainable forest management, as well as forest governance at the local level, will be important aspects to help achieve this goal. At the same time, building closer partnerships between regional processes, among others, will be critical to ensuring a complete and coherent international approach to the issue. The mandate provided by the sixth session will undoubtedly make illegal practices and illegal international trade in forest products an important topic in the future deliberations of the Forum, featuring prominently within its new Multi-Year Program of Work to be adopted at its next session in 2007.

I thank you for your attention.