



UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
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Hon Minister, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you in Uppsala for the concluding workshop on “Lessons Learned on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa”. I would like to first and foremost thank the Swedish Government for generously providing funding for this initiative and hosting this workshop in support of the UNFF. I would also like to thank the African Forest Research Network (AFORNET), hosted by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) and the FAO for their roles as co- sponsors; and to CIFOR, ICRAF, IPGRI, CIAT other organizations and individuals for their technical support.

Moreover, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the Steering Committee under the chairmanship of Björn Lundgren for the hard work, commitment and excellent organization of this event.

Dear participants,

May I seize this opportunity to, on behalf of UNFF Secretariat and all forest-loving people of the world, congratulate Professor Wangari Maathai for the Nobel Peace Prize Award. In choosing Professor Wangari Maathai as the peace prize laureate, the Nobel committee has acknowledged the strong linkage between the “trees”, sustainable development and peace. While we forest lovers know quite well this simple but strong

linkage, it sure is a defining moment and an expansion of the traditional bounds of the Nobel Peace prize. We are proud of this. We are also optimistic that recognition of Prof Maathai by the Nobel Prize will give further impetus and a new urgency to the cause of forests globally and to the restoration of the world's forests, in Africa and beyond.

Having said that, allow me to first to say a few words about the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), on how it was established, what is its purpose, and tell you about the significance of this particular initiative to the UNFF process.

But even before that, let me draw a little bit broader picture.

Sustainable forest management is part of a broader development agenda. Finding solutions to alleviate poverty will be crucial for both achieving the Millennium Development Goals and furthering our work here in this Forum. A few years ago about the 189 world leaders come together to create a holistic vision for development, encapsulated in the eight inter-connected Millennium Development Goals. Let me reiterate some of these points from the view point of international forest policy.

First, we need coherent and predictable forest policies, which recognize all forest benefits. This is a cornerstone for sustainable forest management. These supportive policies and enabling environments are instrumental in attracting the private sector and in creating the much needed forest markets and revenues from forest products and services. Forests and forest products should be used in support of social development, environmentally sound management and conservation, and economic growth in a sustainable manner, thus contributing to the overall development of the society as a whole. Also, policies that bring stability and expand the capabilities of individuals and communities, dependent on forests, can diversify their income base and is essential for long term sustainability. Strengthening institutional capacity for governance, and providing extensive opportunities for education, especially for girls, will be important factors in maintaining a healthy local and national economy.

This leads to my second point: efficient and effective land tenure systems and access to forest resources are crucial for local and indigenous communities and provide an

economic incentive for sustainable forest management. When people have control and ownership of forests, then they have greater opportunities to capitalize on forest assets, and even greater incentive to sustain the resources. Good management and clear principles of social responsibility are pre-requisites for sustainable forest management.

Finally, none of these pieces can come together without the third basic tenet of sustainable forest management, that of good governance and strong law enforcement. A lack of economic opportunities combined with weak law enforcement often leads to illegal logging, which can destroy ecosystems and deprive the local forest-dependent community of the possibility of sustainable livelihood. It can also further push forest-dependent people into extreme poverty.

Illegal logging and trade in illegally harvested forest products have been eroding the resource bases of many countries and impacting on their socio-economic and ecological health. We have seen recently that internal conflicts and illegal harvesting of forest resources go hand in hand. Often, illegally harvested timber is exported to finance violent activities. Such crises are most often beyond the coping ability of national governments, and require intergovernmental support. There is thus a need for international mechanisms that ensure stability and compliance and that can assist in conflict prevention and management.

Achieving the MDGs and other international commitments, including those on forests, requires a new, more holistic thinking on the interaction and linkages between people and the precious natural resource base. Forests are deeply entwined with other sectors of the society and their management requires coordinated efforts and inter-sectoral approaches. There is a need for a broader, more inclusive vision to create mechanisms that would allow interaction between various stakeholder groups and sectors that influence forests and the forest-dependent poor. There are two readily available tools that governments can use to formulate and unify their national policies and programs: National forest programmes and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

In many countries, national forest programmes provide a framework for a dialogue to address macro-level and cross sectoral issues critical to sustainable forest management. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are increasingly used as a roadmap for development and, more recently, as a plan for country level achievement of MDGs. Thus, it is of utmost importance that PRSPs be aligned with the national forest programmes and strategies.

Raising the awareness of and strengthening the commitment to sustainable forest management, and at the same time facilitating the implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for action are at the heart of the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, which was established in October 2000 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

UNFF is the only subsidiary organ of ECOSOC with universal membership and it serves as the key intergovernmental body for comprehensive, forest policy dialogue and formulation at the global level. Our mission is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen the long term political commitment to this end.

Country-led initiatives such as the Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Management in Africa have been playing a very important role in the forest policy deliberations under the ad hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, ad hoc Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, and now the UNFF. They have been instrumental in providing opportunities for countries to exchange experiences, clarify issues, and identify needed actions to be considered in the intergovernmental forest policy deliberations.

The theme of the Uppsala Workshop is directly relevant to the work of UNFF. Issues of sustainable forest management in Africa are at the heart of the work of UNFF. In fact at the fourth session of UNFF held in Geneva in May this year, the Forum dedicated part of the official session to the “Africa Day” in which some of you participated.

The themes of this workshop are consistent with the issues addressed in the Ministerial Declaration of the ECOSOC High Level segment of 2003 – i.e. the promotion of sustainable forest management in rural development with attention to Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The expected outputs of this workshop are of particular interest to the UNFF. The strategy on how to extend positive lessons on SFM in Africa; plans and priorities on how to achieve SFM in Africa; suggested roles of different actors; and enhanced African participation in international forest related processes and initiatives all cut across the key policy issues of the UNFF.

These outputs will not only provide a valuable input to the deliberations at the fifth session of UNFF, but will continue to yield results beyond. This workshop provides us with a golden opportunity to share country experiences, highlight lessons learned on various aspects of sustainable forest management and identify actions that the international community can take to support further achievement of sustainable forest management in Africa

As we look towards the future of UNFF, the way ahead is through partnerships and coordinated action, and I am encouraged to see a strong African constituency emerge out of the Lessons Learned on SFM in Africa project. I am confident that partnerships with such a constituency will strongly influence the wide regional agenda on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa.

Mr. Chairperson, the period leading to the fifth session of UNFF, which will take place in May 2005, is crucial to the forest community of the world. The member States of the UNFF will address three major issues at UNFF 5: first, the review of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests; second, a review of progress in the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action; and third, consideration of future International Arrangement on Forests. UNFF 5 will also have the high-level segment which will be attended by the ministers responsible for forests and the heads of the International Organization as well and a large representation of the Civil Society, with strong involvement of all Major Groups.

I would also like to bring to your attention that in preparing for the 5th session of the UNFF, an Ad hoc Expert Group meeting was held recently in September in New York. In this meeting, experts from all over the world, member States, stakeholders and CPF members participated in a very constructive discussion and succeeded in identifying a balanced range of options for the future International Arrangement on Forests that will be considered at UNFF 5.

I wish you all a productive meeting and enjoyable stay here in Uppsala. The UNFF family will be looking forward to the results of the workshop.

Thank you for your attention