UN FORUM ON FORESTS HOLDS HIGH-LEVEL ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSIONS
ON SOCIOECONOMIC POTENTIAL, POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

As Ministerial Segment Continues, Senior Government Officials
Say ‘Time Is Now’ for Decisive Action on Sustainable Forest Management

Forestry and woodland management were critical to tackling a number of key sustainable development challenges and the most effective way to integrate related issues into the post-2015 international development agenda would be to create a cross-cutting goal on natural resources, the United Nations Forum on Forests heard today as it continued the Ministerial Segment of its tenth session.

The Forum met “at a critical time”, Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs told a high-level round-table discussion that was among three interactive debates held on the second day of the body’s two-week session under way in Istanbul, Turkey. He said that the vital issues forests influenced – from livelihoods to biodiversity and climate change – had been highlighted in the outcome of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and would be considered during negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

World leaders at the historic Rio summit had launched a process to develop sustainable development goals that would succeed, but not supplant, the Millennium Development Goals. “No one disputes that forests are vital natural resources for people and the planet,” he said, noting that work, including through the Forum, on a cross-cutting goal dealing with natural resources could be an “entry point” to include forests in the United Nations development framework going forward beyond 2015. In that way, the socio-economic and environmental services provided by forests, and their links to other sectors, would be integrated across all the Organization’s work on sustainable development.

Delivering the keynote address during a parallel round-table discussion that explored linkages between forests and economic development, Uma Lele, a scholar and Former World Bank Senior Adviser, pointed out that large increases in foreign direct investment had ramifications for land and water use. “Forests are being pressured from many sources, but financing in [that] sector is not increasing,” she said. In fact, financing had peaked in the mid-1980s, mostly concentrated on biodiversity.

She noted that forestry management was a cross-cutting issue, with links to agriculture and food security, investments in transportation, commodities and financial markets and to biofuels, particularly in developing countries. An important lesson from the past two decades was that the (more)
structural transformation of countries made a difference. Governance reform and South-South cooperation had improved links between countries and regions on forestry management.

The round-table discussions were followed by a high-level interactive dialogue with the heads of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, a voluntary arrangement of 14 organizations involved in forest issues. Moderating that event, Jan McAlpine, Director of the Forum Secretariat said that the dialogue aimed, among other things, to raise the profile of forests as an engine for economic development, building on the work of the Partnership which, though it had been in existence for more than a decade and its work often unacknowledged, was one of the most innovative examples of the United Nations “working as one”.

When he wrapped up the day’s interactive discussions, Veysel Eroğlu, Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey, said forests were the “engine of development and the lungs needed to combat global climate change”. Destruction of the world’s woodland areas must be halted; forestation must continue. Good forestry management and the financing to bolster it were needed to achieve that goal. He called on developed countries in particular to contribute to the United Nations Fund on Forests, and on all countries to coordinate efforts and share experiences to protect forests and stop erosion.

The Forum today also continued its ministerial-level general debate, hearing some 40 speakers. Jennifer Chilunga, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Management of Malawi, said her Government was facing serious challenges to sustainably manage resources for economic development in the face of significant deforestation and degradation. A least developed country, Malawi had limited technology and financial and human resources. Despite such constraints, it had set up her Ministry to address challenges to manage resources. Last year, the Government set up the Forest Development and Management Fund to support forestry activities. Thanks to that new funding source, forest replanting during the annual forestry season had jumped on average from 50 hectares to 2,000 hectares annually.

The representative of Haiti said that country’s forest cover was just 2 per cent, one of the lowest in the world. There were few signs of pastoralists in the three protected natural areas, yet the livelihood of many Haitians depended on agriculture. Erosion of the nation’s arable land threatened food security. The exclusive dependence of a vast majority of people on charcoal for cooking fuel and energy production was a major obstacle to reversing the country’s deforestation rate. Haiti’s tragic plight demonstrated that sustainable forestry management could help reduce poverty, she said, stressing that when forests disappeared, as they had in Haiti, economic depravation ensued. The forest instrument and the four global objectives were the most appropriate tools for addressing that challenge.

With those and so many other vital issues that needed to be addressed, Rolf Mansere, of Switzerland’s Federal Office for the Environment, wondered: if the Forum really possessed the strength and credibility to provide a comprehensive policy view on forests needed for a custodian of sustainable forest management; if the Forum was in a position to provide guidance to other processes and conventions on key issues relating to the multifunctionality of forests; and if the Forum’s guidance empowered national ministries and agencies responsible for forests to coordinate the multiple forest-related matters across sectors.
He further stated that as the Forum was to review the international arrangement on forests in 2015, it must be recognized as the central place to coordinate and generate momentum on forest-related matters throughout the entire United Nations system. That could mean engaging on a legally binding instrument such as a broad framework convention for forests, which could be implemented by regional instruments, such as the future European forest convention, or the Congo Basin agreement.

Also speaking today in the general debate were the ministers and senior Government officials from Comoros, Congo, Ghana, Libya, Yemen, Angola, Romania, Philippines, Samoa, Bangladesh, Canada, Germany, Mongolia, Austria, Malaysia, Sweden, Namibia, Ireland, Australia, Russian Federation, Japan, Argentina, Chile, Ukraine, Republic of Korea, Israel, Senegal, Bolivia, Thailand, Vietnam, Italy, Peru, South Africa, Costa Rica, India, Liberia and Algeria.

The Forum’s tenth session will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 10 April, to discuss regional and subregional inputs and to hold a multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Background

The United Nations Forum on Forests continued today in Istanbul the Ministerial Segment of its tenth session, with delegations expected to participate in two round-table discussions, respectively on “Forests and economic development” and the “Rio+20 outcome, post 2015 United Nations development agenda and the international arrangement on forests.” The Forum was also expected to hold a high-level interactive dialogue with the heads of the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. Finally, the Forum was expected to continue hearing statements from ministers and other senior Government officials. (For background on the tenth session of the Forum, see Press Release ENV/DEV/1344.)

Round Table 1

Alhaji Inusah Fuseini, Minister of Lands and Natural Resources of Ghana, and Arvidis Ozols, Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture of Latvia, co-chaired Round Table 1, on “Forests and economic development”.

Delivering the discussion’s keynote address, UMA LELE, Independent Scholar and Former World Bank Senior Adviser, pointed to much good news in the forest sector in recent years. Forest cover loss had slowed considerably for forest-rich countries like Brazil and Turkey. China had also gained forest cover, as had India and Viet Nam. Tree cover had also increased, and the share of forest emissions in carbon emissions had declined in China, Costa Rica, Brazil and Mexico. The number of trees planted and grown outside of forest areas had also increased, as has the agroforestry sector.

But much remained to be done, and countries needed help with mitigation and adaptation, she said. Forestry management was a cross-cutting issue, with links to agriculture and food security, investments in transportation, commodities and financial markets and to biofuels, particularly in developing countries. Large increases in foreign direct investment had ramifications for land and water use. Forests were being pressured from many sources, but financing in the forest

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sector was not increasing. In fact, financing had peaked in the mid-1980s, mostly concentrated on biodiversity.

An important lesson from the past two decades was that the structural transformation of countries made a difference, she continued. Governance reform and South-South cooperation had improved links between countries and regions on forestry management. But there was a great deal of scope for improving data. There was great need for investments in agriculture, research and development. Increasing demand for food put more pressure on forests. According to many economists, no amount of external aid would make a difference if there was a change in world prices or a reduction in the food supply due to the introduction and use of biofuels. She stressed the need for more sustainable and comprehensive policies for land use, with a focus on poverty reduction and income generation, versus targeted ones.

When delegations took the floor, the speaker from Argentina said her country had used forests for communications and climate change mitigation. Forests were indispensable for mankind’s welfare and development. Argentina was trying to ensure they were developed sustainably through binding legislation and budgetary allocations. It had 1.2 million hectares of forests that were growing rapidly, and the country had allocated 630 million pesos to strengthen institutions and help those who conserved and sustainably managed forest lands. Strict national regulation had curbed the loss of forest land. The forestry sector employed 500,000 people.

The speaker from Belarus said that in next 20 years the Government would pump human and financial resources into sustainable forestry management in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals.

The representative of Canada said his country was a leading exporter of forestry products. To maximize the value of forest resources, his Government had developed a broader basket of end products to cushion the sector. It had significantly invested in emerging technologies, as well as in research and development in advanced bioenergy systems, among other areas. Canadian producers had become leaders in bio-ethanol, engineered fibre mats and other products. Canadian forestry-related exports last year to China and the Republic of Korea increased significantly, supporting thousands of jobs in forest communities in western Canada. Eighty per cent of Canada’s communities were in forest regions; the Government ensured they benefitted fully from forestry resources.

The speaker from India said her Government had adopted conservation-oriented policies and strategies to enhance its forest cover. Its ambitious $10.3 billion “Green India” initiative aimed to add 5 million hectares of forest cover, and also improve the quality of forests over a similar area during the next decade. She lamented the lack of sufficient financing worldwide for sustainable forestry managements, and called for more money to be dedicated to vital projects towards that end.

Uganda’s delegate said his country aimed to transform itself from a rural economy to a prosperous middle-income country. Forests were a primary growth sector for that transformation. Only 15 per cent of Ugandans had access to electricity from the national grid. The rest depended on wood fuel, severely curbing the nation’s tree supply. There was a lack of awareness about the nexus between forests and the availability of water, and the full scope and value of forests. The non-cash value and contributions of forests were not appreciated, nor was the fact that Uganda was
home to more than 58 per cent of the world’s gorilla population. Even more challenging was the lack of information and data needed to justify budgetary allocations for sustainable forestry management. He appealed to the international community to support the systemic capture of empirical data in order to promote forestry’s cash and non-cash value, forest ecosystems and medicinal products derived from forests.

In closing remarks, VEYSEL EROĞLU, Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey, and Co-Chair of the Ministerial Segment, gave his full support to the Forum and cooperation in the forestry field. Turkey had done its part to support rural development and increase living standards in rural communities in and around forests. Several Government ministries and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency were cooperating with local village Governments towards that end. Thanks to those efforts, living standards of rural communities had improved. Turkey’s forest cover had also expanded from 7.2 million hectares in 1973 to 21 million hectares in 2013. That figure was expected to reach 22 million hectares in 2014. By 2023, an estimated 23 million hectares of land would be covered by forests.

The Government had restructured the Forestry Ministry and added a Directorate for non-forest products, he said. It aimed to set certain development targets for communities that lived in and around forests, offering them subsidized loans, training in forestry activities, solar energy use and beekeeping services, among other areas. It also strove to increase preserved forest cover to 10 per cent of the national territory. By the end of 2012, wood cover totalled 506,000 hectares of land. The Government donated $2.5 billion in aid last year to other nations and signed bilateral cooperation agreements with 40 countries. The regional office in Konya, Turkey of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) addressed desertification problems in Turkey and other parts of the Mediterranean Basin area, as did Turkey’s own research centre in Konya. The Turkish Government sought greater collaboration with the United Nations on such issues. It also organized a workshop two years ago for countries grappling with soil erosion.

Also speaking during the round table were ministers and other representatives of Ireland, Grenada, Israel, Malaysia, Finland, Sudan, Iran, Lesotho and Jamaica.

**Round Table 2**


At the outset, Mario Ruales Carranza of Ecuador, overall Forum Chair and Co-Chair of the Ministerial Segment, introduced the co-chairs for the round-table: Jean-Pierre Thébault, Ambassador for the Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, and Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, Under-Secretary-General for Environment, Energy, Science and Technology, Ministry of External Relations of Brazil.

In a keynote speech, WU HONGBO, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said that the Forum’s current session met at a critical time. “We are in a defining period (more)
that will shape the future of United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, with sustainable development at its centre,” he said. The cross-cutting connections among the Rio+20 outcome, the post-2015 development agenda and the future of multilateral forest policy, required comprehensive analysis and review. Today’s dialogue provided a first formal discussion on those links. It would help guide the Forum as it prepared for its eleventh session in 2015, when a decision would be made on the future of the international arrangement on forests.

He said that forests provided a wealth of ecosystem benefits that nourished human well-being, economic growth and environmental sustainability, he said. It was important to recognize and advance those interconnections. The Rio+20 outcome document, “The Future We Want”, incorporated a range of provisions on forests. It conveyed a strong message on the international arrangement on forests, including the forest instrument and its global objectives, the Forum and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

Recalling that the Rio+20 outcome had also devoted specific attention to forests, he said the document had underscored the links between the world’s woodlands and other sectors, including mountains and agriculture, as well as to the “green economy”. That was why world leaders at Rio had highlighted the importance of integrating sustainable forest management objectives and practices into mainstream economic policy and decision-making. He also stressed the need for further examination of the relationship between forests and sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Finance and capacity-building were also important areas of work for the Forum, he continued. The results of the Forum’s Facilitative Process and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests’ Advisory Group on Finance would help guide future cooperation in delivering adequate resources to that vital sector. They would also provide invaluable inputs to the design of a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy, and its facilitation mechanism, as called for at Rio.

Continuing, he said that world leaders at Rio had launched a process to develop sustainable development goals. They had agreed that such goals must be action-oriented, concise, easy to communicate, limited in number, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries. To that end, the way forward must recognize the economic, social and environmental benefits of each action in an integrated and comprehensive manner, as well as the different levels of development among countries. It must maintain the momentum in achieving poverty eradication and food security and address the cross-cutting impacts of conflicts, disasters and inequality on all goals, and make use of the cross-cutting, multifunctional role of natural resources for economic growth, social inclusiveness, poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and peace and security.

The forum could be instrumental in employing such an approach, given its comprehensive and holistic vision on forests, he said. Forests were vital natural resources for people and the planet. “No one disputes that,” he said. One option under discussion was to work on one cross-cutting goal on natural resources. That could be an entry point to including forests in the post-2015 development framework. In that way, the socio-economic and environmental services of forests and their connections to other sectors would be integrated across all other sustainable development goals. Addressing the forest issues in an integrated manner could help shape a future development agenda with sustainable development goals at its centre. An important “test of our resolve” will be measured by how successfully cooperation was strengthened.

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In the ensuing interactive discussion, several representatives said that, while a special event was scheduled in September during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly to discuss the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 was scheduled to be deliberated in the Forum’s next session in 2015. The speakers expressed concern that such gaps might hamper coherence and synergy between the post-2015 agenda and the future international arrangement on forests. In that connection, Japan’s representative stressed a need for a clear message, through the Co-Chair’s summary, to instruct the Forum Secretariat on its presentations to ensure constructive deliberations during the General Assembly event.

The representative of Bolivia said his delegation deemed a “green economy” as only one of many tools to address sustainable development issues. The Forum was not an appropriate venue to discuss the sustainable development goals, he said, stressing the importance of not impeding the work of the General Assembly and other bodies.

The delegate of Gabon stressed the importance of rightly placing sustainable forest management in the post-2015 framework. Noting that poor people had not been consulted when the Millennium Goals were created, he emphasized the need for a more inclusive approach to formulating Sustainable Development Goals.

Austria’s speaker was among those who reminded the Forum that its members were tasked to consider options on sustainable forest management, including the establishment of a legally binding instrument, as preparations for the body’s eleventh session got under way. A legally binding measure was under discussion in the European Union. To adequately prepare for the next session of the Forum, there was a need to set up a well-organized, transparent format for dialogue, with a forward-looking focus, to provide well-considered decisions.

The representative of India was among those expressing concerns about a legally binding instrument. He felt that a non-legally binding instrument worked well as it was easier to reach consensus on such a mechanism. There was no immediate cause for bringing a legally binding instrument to sustainable forest management.

Among other points made during the discussion were the need for more international support in the areas of financing and technology to developing countries, the importance of focusing on cross-cutting issues, and the need to identify the fair market value of the benefits and services forests provided.

In closing, Mr. WU clarified that the special General Assembly event in September would focus on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. It might not be a mature opportunity to delve into the discussion of sustainable development goals. He said that as some delegations rightly pointed out, the Millennium targets had been created behind closed doors, but the process of elaborating sustainable development goals was open, already gathering a huge amount of inputs, enough to create 150 targets.

Also participating in the interactive dialogue were the representatives of Germany, Turkey, Malaysia, Thailand, Argentina, Indonesia, United States, Congo and Togo. The representative of the European Union Delegation also spoke.
Interactive Dialogue

Also in the morning, the Forum held a high-level dialogue with the heads of the member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The discussion was headed up by Mario Ruales Carranza (Ecuador), Chair of the tenth session of the Forum and Co-Chair of the Ministerial Segment. Jan McAlpine, Director of the Forum Secretariat moderated the event.

Opening the discussion, Mr. RUALES CARRANZA said the dialogue intended to provide a platform for member organizations to present their views on how economic development opportunities in forests could be better defined and understood, and highlight the challenges and opportunities for forest financing, including their organizations’ ongoing and future actions on forest financing. It also gave them a platform to discuss how forests could be integrated more effectively into other sectors, including in follow-up activities related to the Rio+20 outcomes and the post-2015 development agenda.

Ms. MCALPINE added that the dialogue aimed, among other things, to raise the profile of forests as an engine for economic development, building on the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, which, she said, was a voluntary partnership that had been in existence for more than a decade and, while its efforts often went unrecognized, it was in fact an excellent example of the United Nations “working as one” agenda.

The participants included: Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Assistant Director-General Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests; Braulio de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity; Dr. Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chair, Head of Delegation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF); Peter Holmgren, Director-General of the Center for International Forestry Research; Tony Simons, Director-General of the World Agroforestry Centre; Emmanuel Ze Meka, Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization; and Stewart Maginnis, Global Director, Nature-based Solutions Group, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Other high-level participants were Niels Elers Koch, President of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations and Vice-Chair of the Collaborative Partnerships on Forests; Mansour N’Diaye, Chef de Cabinet and Acting Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; Peter Dewees, Forest Advisor, Sustainable Development Network, World Bank; and Tim Christophersen, Senior Programme Officer, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

For her part, Dr. ISHII said that over the past 20 years, the GEF had witnessed a growing awareness of the importance of the environment to ensuring overall sustainable development. That recognition had converged with the notion that forests provided enormous opportunities to achieve that goal. She said that in all this, forests were becoming a “convener”, bringing together various stakeholders in the field to generate interest in — and ideas for — sustainable development and protection of vital natural resources.

To this, Mr. MAGINNIS added that for too long, forests had been seen as a problem to be solved rather than an opportunity seized. To respond to that view, the forest community must,
therefore, act as “integrators”, as well as convenors, contributing to the efforts to find solutions to the full spectrum of sustainable development issues. The profile of forest issues could be raised if measures were taken to systematically document the true value of forests to local livelihoods, with the awareness that that might not simply be “cash value” and might not be entered in national registers.

Mr. DE SOUZA DIAS called for an integrated approach, as the issues being discussed today could not be viewed in isolation. Indeed, the “silo approach” that many groups and countries had employed in their pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals had actually hampered broader efforts to achieve many of the agreed targets.

In light of this, he urged that issues regarding ecosystems and forests be integrated into broader development activities to help deliver on goals for water, food security and health. “If we continue to look at these issues in isolation, we will fail. We will miss a huge opportunity,” he said. Echoing agreement and offering a solution, Mr. HOLMGREN said: “Forestry must be taken out of the forests.” That would require working at the “landscape level” to achieve the Millennium Goals and carry through with the post-2015 development agenda.

For his part, Mr. ROJAS-BRIALES agreed that the integrated approach was the best way forward as discussions continued on the sustainable development goals. But at the same time, the specificities of forests must be made clear to all stakeholders. For example, if the specific concerns of people living in mountains or other areas that depended on forests and woodlands were not raised, huge swaths of the world population would be left with no allies as the international community pushed forward with the post-2015 development agenda. Still, forestry issues could not be “too diluted” or else they would get lost in that process.

The representatives of Ireland and Nepal also participated in the discussion.

Statements

FOAUD MOHADJI, Vice-President in Charge of the Ministry of Production, Environment, Energy and Industry, Comoros, said in his small island developing State, the forests covered 17 per cent of the national territory, helping to maintain capacity of water basins and food supplies. They were a significant revenue generator. Wood products contributed 40 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). The forest was a carbon sink that captured 1 million tons of carbon dioxide annually.

But the island’s woodland areas were disappearing at a dizzying rate, declining from 6.6 per cent of national territory in 1990 to just 2.2 per cent in 2000. He feared the total disappearance of the nation’s forests in the next 10 years. Extreme poverty and increasing demand for forestry products had led to forest and soil degradation. The rapid disappearance of forests had led to runoff and soil deterioration of 57 per cent. Forest decline had led to biodiversity loss and had threatened traditional green forms of energy. To obtain the Millennium Development Goals, the forest principles must be implemented. He expressed hope that the Forum’s recommendations would enable all nations to take steps towards sustainable forestry management.
JENNIFER CHILUNGA, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Management, Malawi, said her Government was facing serious challenges to sustainably manage resources for economic development in the face of significant deforestation and degradation. A least developed country, Malawi had limited technology and financial and human resources. Despite such constraints, it had set up her Ministry to address such challenges. Last year, the Government set up the Forest Development and Management Fund to support forestry activities. Thanks to that new funding source, forest replanting during the annual forestry season had jumped on average from 50 hectares to 2,000 hectares annually.

She said that increasingly, women were active in wood and non-wood small and medium-sized forest enterprises. That was important for women’s empowerment; women produced and sold most of the clean cooking stoves that were helping to combat climate change. Malawi was one of four countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to pilot the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) Monitoring, Reporting and Verification Programme. With European Union support, Malawi had launched the Improved Forestry Management for Sustainable Livelihoods Programme involving rural communities, she added.

HENRI DJOMBO, Minister of Economy, Forestry and Sustainable Development of Congo, said that forest certification and REDD+ were interrelated processes. That was why those initiatives should receive the same attention and substantial financial resources to ensure the relevant objectives could be achieved. He also noted that deforestation and degradation occurred primarily as a result of the development of industrial and traditional agriculture and the exploitation of “energy wood”. It was necessary to promote new farming techniques and crops, ensuring that they allowed growers to be more productive while reducing environmental impact and improving energy efficiency, especially in rural areas.

He called for the development and implementation of integrated programmes and the promotion of North-South and South-South cooperation, adding that such cooperation was being considered between countries that inhabited tropical forest basins of the Amazon and the Congo, among other regions. He then said that his Government aimed to ensure sustainable management of some 9,937,000 hectares of forest concessions, or 78 per cent of the area granted to logging. A network of protected areas covering some 4 million hectares, or 17 per cent of the country’s territory, had also been set up. The Government, through an afforestation and reforestation programme, sought to establish 1 million hectares of forest in the savannah by 2020, he added.

ALHAJI INUSAH FUESINI, Minister for Lands and Natural Resources of Ghana, said his country’s Forest 2011 initiative had provided Ghana with a unique opportunity for effective engagement of forest-dependent communities in sustainable management approaches and to optimize the flow of benefits to local communities. It also enabled the country to forge partnerships with various stakeholders for the sustainable management of forests while enhancing its contribution to the fight against poverty, particularly in the forest communities. He said that Ghana, with help from its partners, had successfully developed and piloted the methodology for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. It would continue to explore avenues for more partnerships to further promote sustainable forest management and to enhance the contribution of its forests to socioeconomic development.

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MOHAMMAD HAMAD, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Mineral Resources of Libya, said that his country was predominately desert, but the small area of natural forests contained many medicinal and aromatic plants. The previous regime had burned much of the country’s wooded areas, using security concerns as justification. The new Government aimed to preserve forests and was keen on supporting civil society institutions. Her Ministry had planted tens of thousand of seeds and had distributed thousands to civic groups. It was working to mitigate pollution. She thanked the Italian Government for its help in putting out wild fires a few weeks ago in the Green Mountain.

FARID AHMED MOGAWAR, Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation of Yemen, said that his least developed country had a high population growth rate and was more than 60 per cent desert. Forests comprised just 4.5 per cent of the national territory and they needed sustainable, balanced management. It was important to keep in mind various factors impacting forests and all stakeholders must work together to tackle forestry-related problems, plant trees and rehabilitate degraded areas. Specifically on Yemen, he said that infrequent rainfall was straining national resources. He called on the international community to scale up assistance so that developing countries could strengthen their forest capacity. As a country with low forest cover and victim to natural disasters, Yemen appealed to everyone to help it implement long-term policies to mitigate climate change. Expertise and technical aid were vital, as was international cooperation to reduce the risks and impact of climate change. He stressed the need to dedicate more funds to fighting desertification.

ANDRE DE JESUS MODA, Secretary of State for Forestry Resources of Angola, acknowledged the importance of the current session of the Forum, particularly the discussions that would take place on funding for sustainable forest management. Although provision of funds for such purposes was a responsibility of each State, regional and international collaborative regimes also had a collective responsibility to provide resources to those ends. Noting that the economic and financial crisis had weakened both developing and developed countries, he said that situation had made it difficult for the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Angola had huge potential in resources and rich forest cover, with 63 per cent of its people living in rural areas. Yet, it faced challenges because it was losing 1 per cent of its natural forests annually. Plantation forests were being lost at a greater rate. To address those problems, the Government, he said, had renewed its commitment to implementing relevant legal instruments. It also had adopted a national policy on forests. Deliberations at the current session would have an impact on political commitment of each country to the goals set by the Forum, he added.

GELU PUIU, Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Romania, noted the strong link between forest use and socioeconomic development. Sustainable forestry management should be a priority in the context of the 10-year framework of programmes for sustainable consumption. It was essential to strike a balance between forest conservation and use. Forests should be managed to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations. Forests covered 27 per cent of Romania’s national territory and conservation was a top priority for the Government. It had enacted forestry legislation and forest management and planning. Forests were recognized as integral to Romania’s economy, providing a wide range of food, fuel, medicines, and building and raw materials for industrial processing, he added.

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ERNESTO ADOBO, Undersecretary for Staff Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines, said his country had embarked on a major greening programme, with the aim of planting 1.5 billion trees over 1.5 million hectares of its public domain by 2016. Efforts had also been stepped up to prevent forest degradation through enrichment planting, and enhanced natural regeneration activities, particularly in highly degraded areas.

He said that those two programmes were particularly significant because they were national in scope and involved other key Government departments, with incentives provided to private investors, including partnership ventures. As far as global objectives 2 and 3 were concerned, his Government were adopting a commodity road map, targeting the planting of timber, fuelwood, bamboo, rattan and agro-industrial crops such as coffee, rubber, and fruit trees in identified production areas in forestlands tenured to organized forest communities all over the Philippines.

GAFOA FAITUA TUFUGA, Associate Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Samoa, said the non-cash contributions of Samoa’s small forested area were useful for economic development. Non-forest products, including eco-system services, tourism and cultural services, played a crucial role in maintaining the well-being of rural communities that relied on the forests for shelter, medicine, food and nutrition. Forests also played a vital role in building community resilience against natural disasters like Cyclone Evans that ravaged the country last December.

Samoa’s vulnerability to natural disasters and the country’s recognition of the need for integrated, sustainable management of natural resources had been the driving force behind efforts to create a green economy. With help from the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the European Union, his Government had launched several forest-related initiatives to tackle climate change, ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss and water-related concerns. But Samoa would not be able to achieve sustainable development on its own and would, therefore, continue to seek innovative financing mechanisms. In September 2014, it would host the small island developing States conference, he added.

A.B. TAJUL ISLAM, State Minister, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs of Bangladesh, said his Government was committed to protecting and improving the country’s environment and biodiversity. In 2011, the Constitution was amended to include an article which stated that the State would endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to preserve and safeguard natural resources, biodiversity, wetlands, forests and wildlife for present and future generations. Financing sustainable forest management was crucial for combating climate change. Current funding towards that end was inadequate. He called on all relevant stakeholders to work together to preserve the earth’s natural resources. If they failed to do so, mankind would be paving the path for its own destruction. It was vital to create strategies for capacity-building in developing countries, and to give them access to funds and partnerships. Financial institutions should create appropriate lending tools for sustainable forest development.

TOM ROSSER, Assistant Deputy Minister of Natural Resources Canada, said his country was custodian to one of the world’s largest forested land bases and was one of the world’s largest forest products exporters. As such, Canada had a major stake not only in the health of forests but in the almost 200 Canadian communities that relied on forest products and industries for their

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livelihood. Canada had what it considered to be one of the strongest forest management systems in the world. The Model Forest concept had emerged in Canada from a period of conflict over how to manage its forest resources, at a time when public views, values, and expectations about forests and their stewardship had been fundamentally changing. The Government needed to find a way to listen to those new voices and incorporate the values that they represented, he said, adding that the model was relatively simple in form but “hard work” in practice.

CLEMENS NEUMANN, Director-General, Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Germany, reminded participants that Canada and Brazil had organized the conference entitled “Contributions of Forests to a Green Economy”. The report on the outcomes of that conference had been made available to the current session of the Forum. One of the most important messages to emerge from that event had been that around the world, forests made numerous and varied contributions to a green economy. But there was even greater potential to be tapped, provided that forests were managed sustainably. Two years ago, Germany had launched its forestry plan 2020. The main features included striking a new balance between the demands upon and the capability of forests, and retaining the multifunctionality objective for German forests.

OYUN SANJUAASUREN, Minister for Environment and Green Development of Mongolia, said that about 8 per cent of his country’s total territory was covered in forests. Mongolia’s forest area per capita was eight times larger than the world average. Further, more than 40 per cent of the country was covered by mining and extractive practices. With strong economic growth in the past six or seven years, Mongolia aimed to maintain a largely green economy. About 16 per cent of national territory was designated as a protected area. By 2030, fully 30 per cent of the national territory would be national parks and protected areas.

In 2009, he continued, the Government had passed progressive legislation that banned mining in forest and watershed areas. Some 40,000 hectares of land had been reforested between 2008 and 2012. The Green Belt programme had, among other things, set up wind breaks to protect soil from erosion. Reforestation was increasing, generating about 67,000 jobs. About 1.4 million hectares of woodland had been affected by fires and 1 million hectares had been damaged by harmful insects. The Government had taken steps to address illegal logging and had made environmental issues a priority. A draft “green civilization” strategy would be tabled and sent to Parliament later this spring.

GERHARD MANNSBERGER, Director General, Forestry Department, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria, said his country was highly developed and had forest cover of close to 50 per cent. It had a productive, globally competitive forest industry and a strong legal and institutional framework that had been adjusted over time to keep pace with demands and challenges. The current Forest Act defined sustainable forest management in line with the provisions of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, with the aim of sustainably developing the long-term economic, environmental and social dimensions of forests.

Continuing, he said that a decade ago, the Government put in place the Austrian Forest Dialogue and the National Forest Programme, a dynamic process to support forest-related policy formulation and implementation. Eighty per cent of Austria’s forests were privately owned, mainly (more)
by small holders connected to farms. But they were freely accessible to the public for recreation; forest owners and managers were obliged to manage them in a way that supported public values.

MASRAN MD. SALLEH, Deputy Director-General (Policy and Planning), Forest Department of Malaysia, said his country’s forest played a significant role in the socioeconomic development. In 2012, Malaysia’s exports of timber and timber products had amounted to $6.35 billion and had accounted for some 4 per cent of its GDP. Those sectors provided employment to more than 300,000 people.

Realizing the importance of conservation and protection of forest biodiversity, Malaysia was making integrated efforts to enhance the connectivity of its fragmented forests by establishing a network of ecological corridors, he said. The Government was also embarking on social forestry projects to help eradicate poverty among local communities and enhance the implementation of sustainable forest management, as well as for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Direct participation in eco-tourism was also being encouraged to improve the standard of living of local people, as well as to create jobs for the local communities.

ANDERS LÖNNBLAD, Deputy Director General, Ministry for Rural Affairs of Sweden, said that forests had played an early role in bringing the country out of crisis. Indeed, 100 years ago, Sweden had been poor and its huge forests were largely cut down and degraded. But, the Government had decided to change that by enhancing education on forestry, and putting in place forest information systems and responsible forest management practices. Good governance and secure land tenure rights had also been prerequisites for his country’s journey from poverty to prosperity. Today, forests played a crucial role in economic development, he said, noting that Sweden was ranked as the world’s third largest exporter of sawn timber products and paper. Sweden saw great potential in the future for other wood-based products such as bioenergy and new innovations and products in biorefineries. While his delegation welcomed discussions on the non-cash value of forests, such as payments for ecosystem services, the role of forests in job creation and income generation for rural areas should not be forgotten.

JOSEPH S. IITA, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry of Namibia, said his country was working towards sustainable forestry management. Under the Community Forestry programme, community groups managed 32 wooded areas covering more than 30 million hectares of land. Those groups derived the monetary and social benefits from the resources at their disposal. An estimated $10 million was allocated annually from the federal budget for fire management, tree planting and orchard development, de-bushing, forestry research, and infrastructure development for processing wood and non-wood products such as bee honey and wild fruits. He stressed Namibia’s commitment to global forest management and development. He called on the Forum to heed the warnings of the Turkish Prime Minister and to take forward-looking action on the global forestry agenda.

KEVIN SMYTH, Adviser, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Ireland, stressed the importance of national strategies aimed at utilizing the full potential of forests. New wood-based product developments in renewable energy, textiles, packaging and the procession of composite materials were possible under well-planned national strategies that took into account innovation, rural development, and job creation. More rounded

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and fully inclusive valuation models for forests were needed to reflect forests’ full contribution to all regions.

He said that greater recognition of the protective, air cleaning and recreational functions of urban forests was needed, particularly since half of the world’s population lived in and around major cities. Sustainable forestry management could not be achieved by addressing forests in isolation. Integrated approaches were needed. The Forum’s resolution on forests and economic development should provide clear policy guidance and direction to all United Nations Member States and member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as other relevant global groups and stakeholders.

RUSSELL PHILLIPS, Minister-Counsellor (Agriculture) of Australia, said his country had a long history of forest management. Indigenous Australians had managed the country’s forests for at least 50,000 years. Their traditional knowledge on forest ecology, management practices and the nutritional, medicinal and other properties of forest products, had been significant in shaping the sustainable forest management in Australia. Illegal logging threatened sustainable livelihoods and contributed to deforestation, degradation and loss of habitat and biodiversity. It was also a driver of global carbon emissions. Many consumer countries, including the United States and members of the European Union, were considering or implementing measures to combat the trade in illegally logged timber products. In November 2012, the Australian Government had passed the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act, he added.

ALEXANDER PANFILOV, Deputy Head of the Federal Forestry Agency of the Russian Federation, described how his Government had sought to safeguard forests and enhance forest management, including through measures to address forest fires and pests. The Russian Federation was reviewing its policies with an eye towards sustainable forest management and it would need to amend existing legislation and programme texts. Noting that his country had marked the International Day of Forests on 21 March, he said that as part of that celebration, Government staff had visited schools to raise awareness about forest-related issues. They had also informed students about ways to safeguard forests in order to “leave the forests in the able hands of the future generations”. He also stressed the need for a balanced approach for preventing forest depletion, and he attached importance to a non-legally-binding instrument.

KEIJI FUKUDA, Consul General of Japan to Istanbul, said that as a member of the Montreal Process, which covered 83 per cent of the world’s temperate and boreal forests and 49 per cent of the world’s forests, Japan recognized the need to grasp the full scope of forest products and services. It also understood the need to recognize the value of working with other criteria, processes and organizations to streamline forest-based reporting while avoiding the proliferation of monitoring requirements and associated reporting burdens.

He welcomed the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire in FAO’s flagship publication “Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015”, which improved the consistency of forest-based reporting in 102 countries, in which 87 per cent of the world’s forests were located. During the First Asia Parks Congress, to be held in November, Japan would introduce the new Sanriku Reconstruction National Park project, intended to rehabilitate the area affected by the 2011 east Japan earthquake. During last year’s World Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction,

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FABIANA LOGUZZO, Director of Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture of Argentina, said Argentina had over 33 million hectares of native forests and 1.2 million hectares of planted forests. The Government was making great efforts to sustainably develop the country’s forests in line with international standards. National legislation ensured a minimum budget for environmental protection of native forests and forestry planning at the local level. It also established a national fund for conservation of native forest to compensate local governments that conserved native forests.

The spirit of Argentina’s main legislation in the area had introduced a radical change in the value placed on those resources, providing for 630 million pesos to be distributed to provinces to strengthen institutional frameworks for forestry conservation, restoration and sustainable use. The social value of forests exceeded their market value, she said, adding that forests generated wealth and had a major impact on the quality of life. Argentina had embarked on a series of programmes involving indigenous groups and local communities that depended on forests for their livelihood.

ANGELO SARTORI, Head of the Technical Secretariat of Forest Management, National Forest Corporation of Chile, said that since 1991, his nation had been implementing provisions of its Forestry Act, which covered the use of forest products and development of the forest sector. The challenges to putting all the elements of the Act into practice included standards setting, among others. He went on to say that the Government had subsided afforestation activities carried out by small land owners. As a result, those holding a total of 1.5 million hectares of land had benefited. Many forest owners were also supported in marketing their products. With the expiration of subsidies in 2012, new measures were under consideration. Chile was one of the handful countries that increased forest cover. The forest sector made up 8 per cent of exports and represented 3 per cent of GDP.

IAROSLAV MAKARCHUK, First Deputy Head of State Forest Resources Agency, Ukraine, highlighted the role of forest management in mitigating climate change and providing other functions, saying that such benefits should not be underestimated. Forest issues were reflected in the outcome document adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — known as Rio+20. On 21 March, Ukraine had held various events to mark the International Day of Forests, with many actors taking part, including the media and schoolchildren. It had also been a good opportunity for forest experts to inform the public about their activities. The nation’s experts were also involved in intergovernmental processes outside the country. Lastly, he expressed hope that the current session of the Forum adopts a good document.

DON KOO LEE, Former Minister of Forest Service of Republic of Korea, said that when forests were sustainably managed, they contributed to poverty eradication and economic growth. He urged the international community to rethink the way it approached forestry use and stewardship. Much had been accomplished since the Earth Summit, but a global consensus was still needed to address biodiversity loss, land degradation, drought and soil erosion. Now was the time for decisive action and a balanced approach to forestry use and reforestation. Regional partnerships were crucial for reducing land degradation.

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He said global action was a key for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It was time to move forward to prevent forest degradation. The Republic of Korea had formed forestry cooperation agreements with other Asian nations and it was taking the lead to address the cause of climate change in the region. Capacity-building was a top priority. He called for strong global cooperation to achieve the Millennium Goals and the goals of the three Rio conventions. The Republic of Korea was ready to share its experience and knowledge to reach the Rio objectives.

MOSHE KAMHI, Consul General of Israel to Istanbul, said his country employed a unique system to sustainably manage its forests. The non-governmental organization Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael, which handled forestation activities in the country, had planted more than 240 million trees and had introduced important regulations to control grazing and ensure effective water management. Israel had extensive knowledge and expertise in the field of forestry and ecosystems, advanced practical methods for combating desertification, and ecological services for the community's benefit and development.

Thanks to active forestation and sustainable forest management, Israel, he continued, was one of the few countries in the world that had more trees today than 10 years ago. Forests in Israel provided employment across socioeconomic sectors, including in ecotourism, forest maintenance and upkeep. Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation, MASHAV, regularly hosted seminars to share Israel’s experiences in agriculture and forestry in the face of climate change. It had shared its expertise in combating desertification, integrated pest management, and forestation with Germany, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Timor-Leste and Turkey.

ROLF MANSER, Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland, said there were some crucial questions to be answered: did the Forum really possess the strength and credibility to provide a comprehensive policy view on forests needed for a custodian of sustainable forest management? Is the Forum in a position to provide guidance to other processes and conventions on key issues relating to the multifunctionality of forests? At the national level, did the guidance from the Forum empower the ministries and agencies responsible for forests to coordinate the multiple forest-related matters across sectors?

Looking to the future, he reminded the members of the Forum of their duty to assess the international arrangement on forests in 2015. There was a need to ensure a quality and credible review process. Furthermore, the Forum must be recognized as the central place to coordinate and send impulse on forest-related matters in the whole United Nations system. That could mean engaging on a legally binding instrument such as a broad framework convention for forests, which could be implemented by regional instruments, such as the future European forest convention, or the Congo Basin agreement.

DANIEL ANDRE, Director of Forests of Senegal, highlighted challenges to harmonious forest development, including man-made factors, uncontrolled land exploitation and brush fires that damaged mangroves. It was essential to continue to consider coherence in forest management. Senegal had elaborated a relevant action plan through 2025. In addition, a strategic road map through 2017 was already in place. Measures to promote sustainable forest management included the creation of green scholarship. As a result of implementing policy measures, Senegal had been successfully able to regenerate forests. He also stressed the importance of a certification scheme to
combat the trade of illegally logged wood. In closing, he stressed the essential role forests could play in the post-2015 international development agenda.

DIEGO PACHECO BALANZA, Expert on Environmental Issues of Bolivia, said his Government was contributing to the focus on “living well” and in harmony with Mother Earth. It rejected capitalist approaches and favoured the age-old indigenous vision of living in harmony with nature, where nature and mankind existed on equal footing. In Bolivia, that was important because more than half of the country’s land mass was covered by forests. There were collective rights and protected areas in Bolivia. It was vital to move towards a holistic, integrated approach to forests, sustainable development, mitigation and adaptation, and to strengthen non-market-based mechanisms. Bolivia was working on a joint mechanism to sustainably manage forests.

He was very concerned by the insistence of certain countries to solely promote development of the green economy and the REDD+ system as a way to manage forests. That narrow approach was contrary to the Rio+20 vision. REDD+ had not done anything on mitigation, safeguarding or moving the world towards a sustainable agenda for climate change. He was also worried that United Nations documents failed to recognize the collective role of communities in sustainably managing forests. In the Forum, indigenous peoples were still invisible, a situation that could not continue. It was time to acknowledge community-based organizations as central to sustainable forestry management, and to ensure funding and technology transfer for such local stakeholders.

WIJARN SIMACHAYA, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand, said that his country fully recognized the crucial role of forests in socio-economic development and environmental protection. The Government gave high priority to conserving the integrity of forestry ecosystems, promoting reforestation and strengthening community-based forest management. It had committed to reforest 500,000 hectares of land in the next five years, and to ultimately cover some 40 per cent of the country’s territory.

He went on to say that Thailand supported the forest instrument and planned to register some 20,000 community forests throughout the country by 2020. Thailand had held several activities to celebrate the International Year of Forests in 2011 and it had extended awareness-raising activities through 2012. This year, it planned to launch a nationwide project to plant 800 million trees to celebrate the Queen’s birthday, and an awareness-raising campaign to promote the Four Global Objectives on Forests in all media.

NGUYEN BA NGAI, Deputy Director General of the Administration of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam, said the forestry sector contributed greatly to the national economy. For example, he said that 3,500 businesses employed some 300,000 workers in the wood processing industry. Wood product exports had increased from $1 billion in 2004 to $4.8 billion in 2012. He said that some 25 million people lived in remote, mountainous forest areas. Most were members of poor ethnic minorities whose livelihoods depended on forest-related activities.

Annually, about 50 million scattered seeds were planted, yielding 3 million cubic metres of timber. He called on timber-consuming countries to devise appropriate trade policies for timber-producing countries like Viet Nam, especially those attempting to minimize the negative impact of timber extraction. Through Viet Nam’s Forest Protection and Development Fund, hydropower,
water supply and eco-tourism companies were issuing payments to local communities and farmers nationwide for environmental services. Such REDD+ projects should not only focus on capacity-building, but also on pilot carbon-based payment mechanisms for local people, he added.

GIANPAOLO SCARANTE, Ambassador of Italy to Turkey, said his country’s forest cover totaled 10 million hectares, about 34 per cent of its total land surface. That figure was gradually increasing partly due to reforestation, but mostly because of natural expansion of forests in agricultural land, meadows and pastures. Italy was one of the world’s largest wood importers and was the world’s second largest exporter of wood furniture. Italian sustainably managed forests were expected to ensure the production of 10 million tons of wood in 2020. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Italy had adopted a national strategy for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Cooperation between the public and private sectors enhanced the energy sector, improved forestry management and reduced the risk of forest degradation.

JORGE ABARCA DEL CARPIO, Ambassador of Peru to Turkey, said that his country had several initiatives for sustainable forestry management, among them a new national forest and fauna management system, as well as decentralized forestry management functions. The Government would introduce a forest and fauna service and a national programme for inventory of the country’s wooded areas, the latter with help from FAO and the Finnish Government. Japan’s Government had helped Peru launch a forestry conservation programme. Technical aid from the International Tropical Timber Organization would enable Peru to strengthen forestry governance.

He said that the Government was making major efforts to achieve sustainable forestry management. Current levels of official development assistance (ODA) were insufficient for sustainable forestry management, and they were often targeted to only specific areas. On other related matters, he said it was vital to work with the Convention on Biological Diversity to reverse climate change. He hoped that the agreement reached regarding a United Nations fund for forests would provide sufficient resources to properly address the thematic elements of sustainable forestry management.

NTHABISENG MOTETE, Deputy Director for Forestry, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for South Africa, said the forestry industry, particularly timber production, contributed significantly to South Africa’s economy and employed some 145,900 people. His Department had a development finance programme that gave local grants for projects in non-timber forest products, as well as small and medium-sized enterprise support services. Nevertheless, gaining access to financing to launch projects that would enable the forest sector to meet its maximum potential remained a challenge, largely due to cumbersome administrative procedures. He went on to say that the Forest Sector Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Charter was developed to ensure previously disadvantaged groups could share in the benefits of forestry development. The national development plan, Vision 2030, had identified forestry as a key driver of economic growth, particularly in rural areas.

JAVIER DIAZ-CARMONA, Director-General of Foreign Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador for Climate Change and Global Environmental Affairs of Costa Rica, speaking on behalf of 14 tropical countries, said those nations collectively represented half of rain forests on the Earth. He reiterated those nations’ commitment in achieving the four global objectives set forth by the forest instrument. Recognizing the benefits provided by forests, he urged (more)
the Forum to redouble efforts to place sustainable forest management in the discussion of sustainable development. He also called for the establishment of a global forest fund by tapping existing and new financial sources. Financing sustainable forest management was “very important” to developing countries, he said, also stressing the need for the international arrangement on forests to address the issue of poverty.

V. RAJAGOPALAN, Secretary, Environment and Forests, Ministry of Environment and Forests of India, said his nation had been following conservation-oriented policies with active partnership of local communities. The nation had about one fourth of its geographical territory under forest and tree cover, with a network of protected areas covering 4.8 per cent of its landmass. India had accorded due emphasis to economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability — the three critical components of the sustainable development. More than 300 million people were forest-dependent in India, deriving their livelihood and substantial part of their income from forests.

That situation, he said, had increased the Government’s focus on greater production and efficient utilization of wood, wood fuel fodder, non-timber forest products and medicinal plants. It was also focused on the role forests played in enhancing ecosystem and watershed services, through various technological, financial and institutional interventions. India had been actively contributing to global dialogue of the forestry sector. One of the key challenges that demanded urgent global action was the worrying depletion of biodiversity across the planet. Lastly, he highlighted the successful hosting by his country of the eleventh Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biodiversity in October 2012.

ASTRIDE NAZAIRE (Haiti) lamented her country’s ecological trauma. Haiti’s forest cover was just 2 per cent, one of the lowest in the world. There were few signs of pastoralists in the three protected natural areas, yet the livelihood of many Haitians depended on agriculture. Forests were a major driver of sustainable development. To that end, while Haiti did not have much of a paper industry, Haitians used natural forest products for medicinal purposes. Many species of local fauna were at risk for extinction. Erosion of the nation’s arable land threatened food security. The exclusive dependence of a vast majority of people on charcoal for cooking fuel and energy production was a major obstacle to reversing the country’s deforestation rate.

Haiti’s tragic plight demonstrated that sustainable forestry management could help reduce poverty, she said, stressing that when forests disappeared, as they had in Haiti, economic deprivation ensued. The forest instrument and the four global objectives were the most appropriate tools for addressing that challenge. She encouraged efforts to increase the capacity of Member States to integrate the Rio principles into national economic development plans. She stressed the importance of recognizing the non-monetary value of forests. While, her Government hoped to double the country’s forest cover and to benefit from the work of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, she stressed that it lacked funding and technical means for data collection.

EDWARD KAMARA, Manager for Forest Products Marketing, Forestry Development Authority, Liberia, said the country currently held over 40 per cent of the remaining Upper Guinea Forest Ecosystem and was among 35 international biological “hotspots”. Tropical rainforests covered about 4.38 million hectares, or 45 per cent of total land area. To ensure sustainable management of the remaining forests, Liberia’s relevant policy focused on community,
conversation and commercial uses to ensure forest exploitation was balanced and that it benefitted the nation as a whole.

In 2009, the Government received support from FAO’s National Forest Programme Facility to sustainably manage the country’s forest and share its resources equitably. About 4.6 per cent of Liberia’s forests were in two protected areas, and 30 per cent of forest land was committed to conservation. He noted that slash and burn agricultural practices among forest dwellers were an obstacle to sustainable forestry management. A relevant Commission was facilitating reforms in land policy and tenure and use issues. A community rights law was enacted to rectify inconsistencies in land tenure and forest-use rights.

MOHAMED SEGHIR NOUAL, Director General, Forests, of Algeria, urged the international community to make a concerted response to the challenges facing the world's forests. He also called for the implementation of strategies for sustainable forest management, in order to preserve the planet’s fragile ecosystems. He then noted the holding in Algeria of the third forum on integrated management of Mediterranean forests in March 2013, and stressed that forest managers in his country were mainly concerned with the social dimensions in the field. Algeria had thus adopted integrated development strategies for rural and other populations, which could be implemented at the country level. There was a growing population living in natural ecosystems, he said, before calling for the adoption of a local approach for integrated rural development. His Government had adopted instruments to support decision making, as well as policies to protect natural ecosystems.

Closing Remarks

Wrapping up the Ministerial Segment, Under-Secretary-General WU said that he was pleased to see high-level officials participate in the session, noting that the first two days of ministerial debate would further guide the work of the Forum as it explored ways to save forests and address obstacles hampering sustainable forest management. He reiterated that forests were linked to social and economic development and was a cross-cutting issue that could not be considered in isolation. Lastly, he reminded delegations that the Forum was the only intergovernmental body tackling forest issues in a balanced, integrated manner, underscoring the importance of partnerships.

Taking the floor next, Forum Co-Chair RUALES CARRANZA, also commended the participants on their fruitful deliberations, which would serve as a basis for discussions over the next 12 days. He also expressed his expectation that a positive outcome be adopted at the session’s end.

In his remarks, Minister EROĞLU said forests were the “engine of development and the lungs needed to combat global climate change”. Destruction of the world’s woodland areas must be halted; forestation must continue. Good forestry management and the financing to bolster it were needed to achieve that goal. He called on developed countries in particular to contribute to the United Nations Fund on Forests, and on all countries to coordinate efforts and share experiences to protect forests and stop erosion.