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Emerging Issues

Report of the Secretary General on Emerging Issues:
International Arrangement on Forests, post 2015 United Nations Development Agenda and the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference; the interconnections and implications

Summary
In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015, the Forum may include in the agenda of any of its sessions emerging issues of global significance that are related to and/or have an impact on forests and sustainable forest management and which are urgent, unexpected and not already addressed in the agenda of the respective session. The emerging issues for the tenth session of the Forum were identified by the Bureau of the 10th session of the Forum, based on two major considerations. These include: i) the need for substantive preparation to enable the Forum in its eleventh session in 2015 to review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and to decide on its future, and ii) the implications and interconnection of the important ongoing intergovernmental processes on forests and the international arrangement on forests. Accordingly, this report contains a brief description of the international arrangement on forests and recommendations on the preparatory activities on this matter during the period between the tenth and eleventh session of the Forum. This report also provides an initial assessment of the implications of the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference and the post 2015 United Nations Development Agenda on the international arrangement on forests. The report also discusses the interconnections of these issues, and makes recommendations to the Forum on how to integrate the views of the Forum on issues related to forests in those processes and how to take advantage of these processes in
preparation for the eleventh session of the Forum in 2015. The report also briefly touches “natural capital” as a broad emerging issue. This report will be discussed under the agenda item of “Emerging issues” during the tenth session of the Forum.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015, the Forum may include in the agenda of any of its sessions emerging issues of global significance that are related to and/or have an impact on forests and sustainable forest management and which are urgent, unexpected and not already addressed in the agenda of the respective session.

2. The year 2015 is the time that the Forum would review, according to its multi-year programme of work, the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests (IAFs) and to decide on its future. This year is also the target year for the Millennium Development Goals. The international community has already begun preparing for the post 2015 UN development agenda. Furthermore, the outcome of the recent major intergovernmental process on sustainable development namely Rio+20 Conference entails several important implications on international cooperation, including on the international arrangement on forests.

3. The eleventh session of the Forum will, therefore, review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and decide on its future, it requires a thorough understanding of the implications and interconnections of all the above-mentioned developments. To enable the Forum to make a sound decision on the future of the international arrangement on forests, it would be a highly appropriate time to consider these developments and decide to take advantage of the intersessional period between the tenth session and eleventh session of the Forum to carry out preparatory activities that provide necessary information and analyses on the above-mentioned issues to the Forum in its eleventh session. Accordingly, this report aims to provide some initial ideas on the future international arrangement on forests and related preparatory activities, taking into account the implications of the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference and the post 2015 United Nations Development Agenda on forests. The report also discusses the interconnections of these issues, and makes recommendations to the Forum on how to integrate the views of the Forum on issues related to forests in those processes and how to take advantage of these processes in preparation for the eleventh session of the Forum in 2015.

II. International Arrangement on Forests

4. The ECOSOC decision 2000/35 set the foundation for the international arrangement on forests and established the United Nations Forum on Forests as an intergovernmental body on forests within the United Nations with the following principal functions:

a. To promote the sustainable management of all types of forests and to
strengthen long-term political commitment;

b. To promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests, at the national, regional and global levels;

c. To provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development;

d. To provide a forum for continued policy development among governments, international organizations and other interested parties to foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management and to address forest-related issues and emerging areas of priority concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner;

e. To enhance cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as contribute to synergies among them, including coordination among donors;

f. To foster international cooperation including NS and public private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at national, regional and global levels.

g. To monitor and assess progress at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by governments, as well as by international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, and on this basis consider future actions needed.

5. In 2006, ECOSOC strengthened the international arrangement on forests through agreeing on three additional principal functions for the Forum¹:

a. To enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in particular with respect to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability; and to the implementation of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, bearing in mind the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development;

b. To encourage and assist countries to maintain and improve their forest resources with a view to enhancing the benefits of forests to meet present and future needs, in particular the needs of indigenous peoples and local communities whose livelihoods depend on forests;

¹ ECOSOC /2006/49
c. To strengthen interaction with relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions and instruments, organizations and processes, to facilitate enhanced cooperation and effective implementation of sustainable forest management;

6. The Forum also set four shared global objectives on forests, which were enshrined in the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of forests (hereafter referred to as “the forest instrument”), adopted subsequently by the General Assembly in 2007, to achieve the main objective of the international arrangement on forests and to enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in particular with respect to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. The Forum agreed to work globally and nationally to achieve progress towards their achievement by 2015\(^2\).

7. According to its multi-year programme adopted in 2007, the overall theme of the eleventh session of UNFF in 2015 is “Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement on forests”. Under this theme, the UNFF11 in 2015 will convene a High-Level segment to review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests. In this review, a full range of options will be considered, including a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, strengthening the current arrangement, continuation of the current arrangement and other options; reviewing progress towards the achievement of the global objectives on forests and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (the forest instrument) and its four global objectives on forests (GOFs)\(^4\); as well as reviewing the contribution of forests to the internationally agreed development goals. Several issues can be considered for discussion under various components of the international arrangement on forests.

8. One important discussion is whether to adopt a legally binding instrument specifically on forests. If such an instrument were to be adopted, what would be the key objectives for such an instrument on all types of forests and trees outside forests; what would be its relation with the existing multilateral environmental conventions

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\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/49, paragraph 32.

\(^4\) *Global objective 1*: Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation;

*Global objective 2*: Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people;

*Global objective 3*: Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests;

*Global objective 4*: 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 sustainable forest management;
that are relevant to forests but are not designed to address specifically forests; whether the instrument should have a standing financial mechanism like the GEF for other conventions or have a separate global forest fund or both; how the instrument should be implemented at the global, regional and national level and whether there should be one instrument to be implemented by all countries or it should have separate annexes/protocols for different regions to take into account the specificities of each region. Moreover, how the provisions of the current forest instrument should be used in the new instrument and what will happen to the four global objectives on forests are among the issues to be considered. Which organization or body should be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the new instrument, where the headquarters of the instrument should be located, and how it can be financially sustainable are also among the issues that have to be discussed, in the context of a decision to adopt a legally binding instrument on forests.

9. In the event that countries agree to continue with strengthening the current international arrangement on forests without adopting a legally binding instrument, there are several issues that have to be addressed. In regard to the forest instrument and the GOFs, countries have to find an effective and efficient solution to financing forests. Hopefully, by making a meaningful decision on this matter during its tenth session in Istanbul, the Forum will clear the situation drastically on this matter. Another key area for discussion is how to strengthen the forest instrument both in terms of its implementation and its substance. Whether it should stay as it is now as a global instrument or should it have some regional annexes? Should its implementation be supported by the strategic programmes of the international financial institutions including the GEF, in particular in regard to the preparation of the national reports by countries to the UNFF sessions? Should its implementation be monitored more systematically and rigorously by establishing a subsidiary body on its implementation under the auspices of the Forum? Should a new time line be agreed upon for the achievement of its GOFs or to realign these goals with the global development agenda for the post 2015?

10. There are also many issues that have to be discussed in regard to the functions and working modalities of the UNFF. In light of the rapid developments and evolving mandates of the Forum, Member States may wish to consider additional functions for the Forum or to revise and update its current function. They may also decide on new working modalities for the Forum, focusing more on advancing forest policy development, coordination and implementation at the global, regional and national levels. The Forum may also consider means and tools for the CPF to further support the work of the Forum, including by allocating specific resources to its members to support the work of the UNFF. The interrelation of the Forum, regional organizations and processes as well as major groups is also another area that the Forum may wish to discuss how to strengthen it in 2015.

11. In light of the above, it is evident that reviewing the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and deciding on its future requires substantive
preparations. Such preparatory work has to be done during the period between the tenth and eleventh sessions of the Forum, with the involvement of all of the Forums’ stakeholders. Furthermore, this work has to be done taking into full account the ongoing developments in other major global processes and in particular the deliberations on the sustainable development goals and the post 2015 UN development agenda. The preparations for the Forum’s decision on the future of the international arrangement on forests should be broad, inclusive, and focused and should include, inter alia, analytical studies, organization of expert group meetings, and surveys. The results of these activities should be then provided to the Forum at its eleventh session in 2015 through providing substantive inputs to the official documentation for the Forum including the Secretary General reports to the eleventh session.

III. Post 2015 UN Development Agenda

12. In 2000, the world leaders set forth a shared vision for development based on the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility, in the form of the Millennium Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly. The Millennium Development Goals that followed have since provided milestones for global and national development efforts, with the overall target date of 2015. These goals are focused on a limited set of concrete, and common human development goals and targets namely: eradication of poverty and hunger, universal access to primary education, reducing child and maternal mortality and improving maternal health, promoting gender equality and empowering women, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development.

13. The MDG framework helped to galvanize development efforts, set global and national priorities, and focus action at all levels. These goals provided a common worldwide agenda to address poverty and putting human progress at the forefront of the global development agenda. Important progress has been made in most countries, particularly towards the goals of eradicating poverty and improving access to primary education. Yet, trends have been uneven within and across countries and regions, and much more work remains to be done.

14. Approaching the year 2015 which is the target date for many of the MDGs, it was imperative for the international community to devise an inclusive process to define the post-2015 UN development agenda, taking into account emerging global

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7 For the complete list of the MDGs and their timelines, please see:
challenges and issues and the experiences in implementing the MDG framework, its strengths and weaknesses.

15. The purpose of a global development agenda is not to prescribe specific development strategies or policies, but to provide guidance for priority setting at all levels (global, regional, national and sub-national). To call it a “UN development agenda” is to denote the readiness of the United Nations to serve as the multi-stakeholder platform for its formulation, with the capacity to undertake the broad-based consultations required and with the ambition to produce a global development agenda that all countries and all stakeholders will recognize as their own\(^8\).

16. In this connection, the world leaders during the High-level Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in September 2010 in New York, requests the Secretary-General to report annually on efforts to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and to include recommendations to advance the UN development agenda beyond 2015 in these reports.\(^9\) Initial recommendations in this regard were presented in the Report of the Secretary-General on accelerating progress towards the MDGs of August 2011, with special reference to the need for an open and inclusive process of consultations on the agenda\(^10\).

17. The outcome document of the 2010 MDG Summit further requests the President of the General Assembly to convene a special event to follow up on efforts made towards achieving the MDGs during its 68th session, which begins in September 2013. This could provide an opportunity to lay the foundations for consensus on the post-2015 UN development agenda.

18. The 2011 Report of the Secretary-General recommended an open and inclusive consultation process, in order for the post-2015 agenda to have the best development impact.\(^11\) With this in mind, in September 2011, the Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda to coordinate system-wide preparations for the agenda, in consultation with all stakeholders. The Task Team, launched in January 2012, brings together senior experts designated by the Principals of over 50 UN system entities and other international organizations. The terms of reference of the Task Team include: assessing ongoing efforts within the UN system; consulting external stakeholders, such as civil society, academic and the private sector; and defining a system-wide vision and road map on the post-2015 UN development agenda. Member States have

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\(^8\) Secretary General Report :Realizing the future we want for all- June 2012
\(^9\) United Nations General Assembly, Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, A/RES/65/1, para. 81
\(^10\) A/67/257
also stressed the importance of other intergovernmental processes feeding into discussions on the post-2015 agenda, especially Rio+20. They also share the view of the Secretary-General on the need to work towards greater convergence of the Rio+20 and post-2015 processes, to arrive at one post-2015 UN development agenda, with sustainable development at its centre. Also, broad and inclusive consultation processes about the vision for the post-2015 agenda are still ongoing and will be essential in shaping a shared vision.

19. The progress made within those processes and by the multiple consultations that will take place at national, regional and global levels will feed into the consultations on the post-2015 UN development agenda, and eventually to the high level event in September 2013. Based on the outcome of the special event in 2013, more focused discussions could then be launched on the specific format and content of a new agenda, including possible goals and targets to be proposed for intergovernmental agreement.

IV. Rio+20 Conference

20. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20 - took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012 and adopted a concrete outcome, titled “The Future We Want”. The Rio+20 Conference reviewed the progress in the implementation of all sustainable development agreements since Rio 1992, and addressed the related gaps and identified emerging issues. The Conference also addressed two major themes: the green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development as well as the institutional framework on sustainable development. The Outcome Document of the Conference contains numerous important provisions including on the green economy, sustainable development goals, high level forum, sustainable development financing strategies options, facilitation mechanisms, sustainable consumption and production patterns, countries with special needs, and the thematic issues.

Green Economy

21. The Rio+20 Conference adopted guidelines on green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development\textsuperscript{12}. Member States affirmed that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions. A green economy should contribute to eradicating poverty as well as sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for employment and decent work for all, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earths ecosystems.

\textsuperscript{12} Paragraphs 56-74, General Assembly Resolution contained in A/RES/66/288
Sustainable Development Goals\textsuperscript{13}

22. At the Rio+20 Conference, countries recognized the importance and utility of a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), which are based on Agenda 21 and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, fully respect all Rio Principles, taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and priorities, which are consistent with international law, build upon commitments already made, and contribute to the full implementation of the outcomes of all major Summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, including the Rio+20 outcome document. These goals should be coherent with and integrated in the United Nations Development Agenda beyond 2015.

23. They also recognized that the goals should address and be focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development, being guided by the outcome document of the Conference. Governments also decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post 2015 development agenda.

High-level political forum\textsuperscript{14}

24. Governments also decided to establish a universal intergovernmental high level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The high level political forum shall follow up on the implementation of sustainable development, and will replace the Commission on Sustainable Development. Countries also identified several potential key functions for this Forum including its role in providing political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development; enhancing integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development at all levels; following up and reviewing progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments contained in Agenda 21, and subsequent conferences and summits on sustainable development; engaging high-level system-wide participation of UN Agencies, funds and programmes in its work; improving cooperation and coordination within the UN system on sustainable development programmes and policies; enhancing the consultative role and participation of Major Groups; strengthening the science-policy interface; and strengthening ongoing efforts of capacity building for data collection and analysis in developing countries.

Sustainable Development Financing Strategy\textsuperscript{15}

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. Paragraphs 245-251
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. Paragraphs 84-86
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. Paragraphs 255 and 256
25. In the Rio+20 Conference, Member States recognized “the need for significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources and the effective use of financing, in order to give strong support to developing countries in their efforts to promote sustainable development, including through actions undertaken in accordance with the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and for achieving sustainable development goals”. They also agreed to establish “an intergovernmental process under the auspices of the General Assembly, with technical support from the United Nations system and in open and broad consultation with relevant international and regional financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders. The process will assess financing needs, consider the effectiveness, consistency and synergies of existing instruments and frameworks, and evaluate additional initiatives, with a view to preparing a report proposing options on an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives”. An intergovernmental committee will implement this process and conclude its work by 2014.

**Technology and Capacity Building**

26. Governments at the Rio+20 Conference requested relevant UN agencies to identify options for a facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies by, *inter alia*, assessing technology needs of developing countries, options to address them and capacity building. They requested the UN Secretary General, on the basis of the options identified and taking into account existing models, to make recommendations regarding the facilitation mechanism to the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly\(^\text{16}\).

**Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns**

27. Governments also adopted the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, as contained in document A/CONF.216/5, and invited the General Assembly, at its sixty-seventh session, to designate a Member State body to take any necessary steps to fully operationalize the framework\(^\text{17}\).

**Thematic areas**

28. The Rio+20 Conference also took forward-looking decisions on a number of thematic areas, such as energy, food security, forests, oceans, cities. The paragraphs on forests will be discussed later in this report.

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\(^{16}\) Ibid. Paragraph 273

\(^{17}\) Ibid. Paragraphs 224-226
Discussions on natural capital

29. As forests are among natural resources and the Forum’s vision on forests has always called for full inclusion of values and services of forests, it is important for the Forum to be informed of another emerging issue which is attracting increased attention from countries and international organizations. In conjunction with the Rio+20 Conference, there was a discussion on the issue of natural capital accounting, among a number of countries and international organizations and businesses. There is no specific definition on this term. From the existing literature, natural capital includes resources such as minerals and energy, forest timber and presumably should include non timber forest products, agricultural land, fisheries and water. It also includes ecosystems producing services that are often ‘invisible’ to most people such as air and water filtration, flood protection, carbon storage, pollination for crops, and habitat for fisheries and wildlife. The landscape approach clearly will benefit the natural capital accounting process and decisions. The key is not only to measure the total value natural assets, but also to measure the distribution of benefits, how much goes to each stakeholder group and the dependence of each group on natural capital, especially the poor. Natural capital is a critical asset, especially for low-income countries where it makes up a significant share of total wealth. Natural capital accounting can provide detailed statistics for better management of the economy, and help better government decision making, and better planning, based on this information. Knowing the total value of natural capital can help us better address poverty issues. A major step towards achieving this vision came recently with the adoption by the UN Statistical Commission of the System for Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA). The SEEA provides an internationally agreed method, on par with the current SNA, to account for material natural resources like minerals, timber, and fisheries. The challenge now is to build capacity in countries to implement the SEEA and to demonstrate its benefits to policy makers. Currently, there is a partnership among a number of governments, UN programmes and bodies relevant to this matter.18

V. International arrangement on forests, Rio+20 and post 2015 UN Development agenda; Implications and interconnections

30. The period from 2013 to 2015 will shape the future of sustainable development issues, the development agenda for the United Nations, and the future direction of the international community on forests after 2015. The intergovernmental processes that are responsible for defining the sustainable development goals; the modalities of the high level political forum; sustainable development

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18 The WAVES partnership includes the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Development Program, and the United Nations Statistical Commission; the countries of Botswana, Colombia, Costa Rica, Madagascar, and the Philippines, which are implementing programs; as well as financial or technical support from Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, and several civil society organizations.
development financing options; and devising a UN development agenda for post 2015 will certainly affect the discussions that UNFF11 will hold on the international arrangement on forests in 2015. On the other hand, these major processes have provided significant opportunities for forests and the Forum to play a vital role in shaping and contributing to the future development agenda for the UN with sustainable development at its core, for many years to come.

31. To take advantage of the opportunities that have been provided by these processes for the international arrangement on forests in 2015 and in devising a road map for intersessional preparatory activities for an informed decision by the Forum on the future of the international arrangement on forests in 2015, it is necessary to review the implications of the Rio+20 outcomes, as well as the post 2015 on forests in a substantive and holistic manner. Such a consolidated and comprehensive assessment is extremely important for the Forum to position its decision on the future of international arrangement on forests at the centre of the global agenda for the period after 2015.

32. This section aims at providing an initial analysis of the implications of some of key outcomes of the Rio+20 conference and the key issues within the post 2015 on forests and other components of the international arrangement on forests. However, a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the above processes on forests requires more time and resources. Moreover, carrying out such an assessment should be done in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and during the period leading up to the eleventh session of the Forum in 2015. Due to the magnitude and the scope of the work, it is also important to emphasize the need for allocation of necessary resources by the Member States to the Forum’s Trust Fund to conduct this work, including their support for the necessary human resources to perform this task.

33. While forests were not specifically on the agenda of the Rio+20 Conference, the outcome of the conference have several provisions on forests, and their interlinkages with other sectoral and cross-sectoral issues of sustainable development, conceptual policy issues and frameworks, relevant to forests and other components of the international arrangement on forests. These paragraphs can be grouped into five sets of provisions.

34. The first group are the paragraphs that are specifically devoted to forests. Paragraphs 193, 194, 195 and 196 in the Outcome Document are specifically devoted to forests. In these paragraphs Member States have highlighted the social, economic and environmental benefits of forests to people and the contributions of sustainable forest management to the themes and objective of the Conference. They also supported cross-sectoral and cross-institutional policies promoting sustainable forest management, and reaffirmed that the wide range of products and services that forests provide creates opportunities to address many of the most pressing sustainable development challenges. They called for enhanced efforts to
achieve the sustainable management of forests, reforestation, restoration and afforestation, and supported all efforts that effectively slow, halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation, including, inter alia, promoting trade in legally harvested forest products. Member States noted the importance of such ongoing initiatives as reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

35. Countries called for increased efforts to strengthen forest governance frameworks and means of implementation, in accordance with the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, in order to achieve sustainable forest management. Member States also committed to improving the livelihoods of people and communities by creating the conditions needed for them to sustainably manage forests, including through strengthening cooperation arrangements in the areas of finance, trade, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, capacity-building and governance, as well as by promoting secure land tenure, particularly decision-making and benefit-sharing, in accordance with national legislation and priorities.

36. Member States have also called for urgent implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (the forest instrument) and the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the ninth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests on the occasion of the launch of the International Year of Forests.

37. Member States recognized that the United Nations Forum on Forests, with its universal membership and comprehensive mandate, plays a vital role in addressing forest-related issues in a holistic and integrated manner and promoting international policy coordination and cooperation in achieving sustainable forest management. They also invited the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to continue its support to the Forum and encourage stakeholders to remain actively engaged in the work of the Forum. Member States stressed the importance of integrating sustainable forest management objectives and practices into the mainstream of economic policy and decision-making, and to that end they committed to working through the governing bodies of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to integrate, as appropriate, the sustainable management of all types of forests into their strategies and programmes.

38. In these paragraphs, the Rio+20 Conference highlighted the significance of many components of the international arrangement on forests namely the forest instrument, the work of the Forum and the role of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in supporting its work. The inclusion of specific paragraphs on forests in the official outcome of the Conference which are mainly derived from the
Ministerial Declaration of the ninth session of the Forum, adopted in February 2011 convey two key messages. The first is the recognition of the substantive role of forests in addressing the most pressing sustainable development challenges. The second is the inclusion of these paragraphs in a globally agreed document by the world leaders which is a strong recognition of the success of the international arrangement on forests and in particular, the work of the UNFF in performing its principal functions.

39. The second group are those paragraphs with explicit reference to “forest”, but in connection to other issues. These include paragraph 52 on “engaging major groups and other stakeholders”, paragraphs 111 and 114 on food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, and paragraph 210 on “mountains” which recognizes that the fragile mountain ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of deforestation and forest degradation.

40. The third group are those paragraphs that do not have explicit reference to forests but by referring to natural resources, they refer implicitly to forests. The substantive link between forests as natural resources and a green economy has been also laid down in the section on “green economy”. Paragraph 60 of the Outcome Document states that: “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication will enhance our ability to manage natural resources sustainably”. This paragraph which stipulates the interrelationship of sustainable management of natural resources and the green economy is inclusive of the interconnection of sustainable forest management and the green economy. Paragraph 61 also brings in another important aspect on the interrelationship of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and the issue of regeneration of natural resources, which include forests. The interconnection and interlinkages of forests, green economy, and sustainable consumption and production patterns is an area that the Forum may wish to decide that further work or studies are needed so to fully understand these important aspects of the post 2015 development agenda.

41. The previous paragraphs provided sufficient explanation on how forests have been addressed as a sectoral, cross-sectoral, and as natural resources throughout the Rio+20 Outcome Document. However, there is a fourth group of paragraphs that relate to the basic functions, mandates and the ongoing work of the Forum, although not specific to the Forum. Following are the paragraphs that are in the fourth group.

42. Paragraph 179 calls for continued and enhanced efforts to support small island developing States (SIDS) in keeping with the multiple ongoing and emerging challenges faced by SIDS in achieving sustainable development. Paragraph 183 and 184 contain similar requests for support for Africa. The UNFF has begun to address these issues through working with these countries to address
the challenges that they are facing in regard to forest financing\textsuperscript{19}, as well as addressing low forest cover, and least developed countries

43. Paragraph 255, 262 and 273 are on a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy, the importance of ensuring steady and predictable access of developing countries to adequate financing from all sources to promote sustainable development, and a facilitation mechanism, respectively.

44. Finance and capacity building are part of the core mandates of the UNFF, to the extent that are related to the UNFF sessions. Important work has been done by the UNFF during the last four years that could contribute extensively to the development of finance strategies and facilitation mechanism. In particular, the outcome of the work of the Facilitative Process, along with the findings of the 2012 Study on Forest Financing by the Advisory Group on Finance, can provide valuable input to the facilitation mechanism, and to the development of Sustainable Development Financing Strategy. However, additional work should be included in the biennial programme and budget of the UNFF Secretariat for 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 to respond to the requests in these paragraphs, with necessary resources and manpower to carry out substantive work on this.

45. The fifth group are those paragraphs on sustainable development goals and a high level political forum. Due to their nature, these paragraphs have near and long term implications for the international arrangement of forests. These paragraphs also are critical areas for the post 2015 UN Development Agenda.

46. A joint time table for a decision on sustainable development goals, the post 2015 UN development agenda, and the future international arrangement on forests may trigger some debate on possible sustainable development goal on forests. This is especially likely, since if to remind that the target year for assessing the progress towards achieving the four shared global objectives on forests is also 2015\textsuperscript{20}.

47. Meanwhile and according to paragraph 249 of the Outcome Document, the sustainable development goals process needs to be coordinated and coherent with the process considering the post-2015 UN development agenda. On the latter and as mentioned earlier, the United Nations has already embarked on a process to plan for the post 2015 UN development agenda and started its work on what should be done after 2015, what steps are necessary to be undertaken, what issues have to be considered in planning for the post 2015. Forests are not currently a major component in the post 2015 discussions, except through inclusion of some forest related targets under the current MDG7 on environmental sustainability.

\textsuperscript{19} Please see the Secretary General Report on Means of Implementation to the tenth session, contained in document E/CN.18/2013/11

\textsuperscript{20} ECOSOC2006/49
This Goal along with other Millennium Development Goals is part of review and scrutiny processes, based on which countries will decide on their future after 2015.

48. Environmental sustainability was included among the eight Millennium Development Goals. Although progress was achieved to reach some of the Millennium Development Goals, achievement of MDG7 on environmental sustainability and its relevant targets by 2015 is off track according to a 2010 report on MDG7 released by the United Nations Development Group. There might be several reasons for lack of progress on this Goal including its limited scope which only addresses one pillar of sustainable development, the limited scope of the issues that are addressed under this Goal, countries decision on giving priority to other goals, and lack of resources and knowledge. The question is how to reverse this trend and how to address the root causes for this lack of progress, in post 2015.

49. It is important to recall that sustainable development has been the mandate for the UN system since the 1992 Rio Summit which agreed that all three pillars of sustainable development namely; environmental protection, economic development and social development should be considered and advanced in a balanced and integrated manner. So, socio-economic development need not be at the expense of the environmental degradation, and vice versa. The Rio Principles also affirmed the responsibility to ensure our decisions today do not undermine the well-being of future generations.

50. So, one important action that has to be taken is to demonstrate the significant social and economic benefits of environmental protection not only for the overall development of countries but also the aggregate contributions of this environmental protection to the achievement of other priorities of countries, in particular, poverty eradication. It should be noted that the four targets under Goal 7 and their 10 related indicators, only address a small subset of issues related to environmental sustainability, failing to address economic and social pillars of sustainable development. Moreover, they do not address other important issues such as land degradation and desertification, management of natural resources, etc.

51. A challenge that countries have to address in designing the post 2015 UN development agenda is to unite environmental protection with economic development and social progress to reduce poverty, narrow inequalities at all levels, address the root causes of environmental degradation, poverty eradication, social exclusion and development gaps and link greater accountability for all people to realize a sustainable future for all. This is specifically where defining sustainable development goals will be quite helpful.

21 Thematic paper on MDG7 Environmental Sustainability prepared by the UNDG Task Force on the MDGs for the 2010 Global MDG Summit
52. Therefore, in designing a post 2015 UN development agenda and to define sustainable development goals, there is a need to change the approach that treats environmental sustainability as a stand-alone goal with little internal coherence with socio-economic pillars of sustainable development and very weak links, at best to what science tells us about ecological limits and thresholds. What needed is to take sustainable development in its three dimensions – social, economic, and environmental is as the defining framework for ensuring human development and well-being in the long run. Such an approach is also in line with the Forum’s vision on forests in which forests provide a wide range of values and services that go beyond purely environmental services and, touch upon the livelihoods of people and their sustainable future, their surrounding environment and economic.

53. Apart from our understanding this approach to three pillars of sustainable development, there is another major challenge that countries negotiating sustainable development goals and designing the post 2015 UN development agenda are facing or will face. Member States at the Rio+20 Conference called for sustainable development goals to be action-oriented, concise, easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. The challenge is how to find such a limited number of goals while every institution, organization and convention is looking to have its own issue(s) captured as a sustainable development goal.

54. Possible priority areas for sustainable development goals including forests, energy, water, land, biodiversity, and ocean are real challenges for countries. So, how to reconcile the huge number of priority areas for action with the criteria set by the world leaders in the Rio+20 Conference, how to make sure that the new sustainable development goal(s) do not have the same fate as MDG7, and how to make the sustainable development goals relevant to the future of the international arrangement on forests.

Inclusion of a cross-cutting sustainable development goal on natural resources and its integration in the post 2015 UN development agenda

55. Given the high degree of global interdependence, setting collective goals and targets to be pursued by the world community will remain important. In doing so, however, a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided. Needed flexibility should be ensured to tailor targets to regional, national and sub-national conditions and priorities. Such tailoring of development targets to national and local circumstances is most effectively and legitimately done through participatory processes. Moreover, and given the outstanding deficits, the post-2015 UN development agenda and the process for defining sustainable development goals should maintain the focus on human development and the eradication of poverty as the ultimate objectives. However, they should also provide an efficient framework
of action to respond to a number of challenges that have become more pressing, and not lose the opportunity to address the issue of means, without being prescriptive.

56. To devise an integrated, unified, efficient and feasible agenda for the international arrangement on forests, and the post 2015 UN development agenda with sustainable development at its core, there is a need to employ an approach that i) recognizes the interconnectedness of global challenges and demonstrates clearly the economic, social and environmental benefits of each action in an integrated and comprehensive manner; ii) Recognizes different levels of development among countries; iii) Maintains the momentum to achieving poverty eradication; iv) Addresses the cross-cutting impacts of conflicts, disasters, and inequality on all goals; v) Makes use of the cross-cutting, multi-functional role of natural resources for economic growth, social inclusiveness, eradication of poverty, environmental sustainability and peace and security.

57. To employ such an approach, one option is to set an umbrella cross-cutting goal on “natural resources” to be included as a “Sustainable Development Goal” and to be integrated across the Post 2015 UN development agenda. It is important to underline that integration of natural resources including forests in the UN development agenda beyond 2015 is of significant importance, as this will facilitate countries in addressing goals in silos. The post 2015 and the Rio+20 processes may require full integration of an umbrella cross-cutting goal on natural resources to underpin the full value of natural resources not only to the environment, but equally to economic growth and social development. Under such an umbrella goal, various existing targets on natural resources contained in the outcomes of major UN conferences and meetings, including the global objectives on forests with new timeline, as well as new proposed goals and targets on other natural resources such as energy, land, biodiversity could be included, subject to agreement among countries. The targets and indicators under such an umbrella cross-cutting goal on natural resources should be mutually supportive, consistent and complementary, so to cover all the critical components of sustainable development challenges, all of its three pillars, as well as their integration.

58. If such an umbrella goal on natural resources could be incorporated in the post 2015 development agenda through its inclusion among other sustainable development goals, it will reinforce the comprehensive approach of the Forum on forests and will help the Forum in its decision on the future of the international arrangement on forests in 2015.

59. Member States are engaging extensively in addressing the process related issues and will soon engage in discussing the substantive issues on sustainable development goals and the high level political forum. According to the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, the decisions on the high level forum’s format and organizational aspects are expected to be taken during the upcoming session of the
General Assembly, with the aim of having the first session of the forum at the beginning of the 68th session of the Assembly in September 2013. The open working group is also requested to submit a proposal on global sustainable development goals to be agreed by the United Nations General Assembly. It will submit a report to the 68th session of the General Assembly containing a proposal for sustainable development goals for consideration and appropriate action.

60. There are several ways for the Forum to influence the above-mentioned processes. Member States, the Bureau, the Forum’s Secretariat and the Collaborative Partnership on Forest, major groups and regional processes are the key and influential stakeholders that can help to convey key points on these issues to respective country representatives in the consultations, the Presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, and the Secretary General. It should be noted that the Secretariat of the Forum has already been designated by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to take the lead in developing an outline for integrating natural resources across the post 2015 UN development agenda and a goal on natural resources and to share it with the CPF for its consideration at its next meeting. The Forum may wish to consider specific actions on this matter to be undertaken by the Forum’s stakeholders in the intersessional period, leading to the eleventh session of the Forum in 2015.

VI. Conclusion

61. The period between 2013 and 2015 will shape the future of the global development agenda and associated institutional modalities, as the international community is engaged in operationalizing the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference and designing the post 2015 UN Development Agenda. This period is also decisive for the future of the international arrangement on forests, as the eleventh session of the Forum in 2015 should decide on this matter. These major issues are closely interlinked and impact each other. A substantive preparatory work on the international arrangement on forests, along with a comprehensive assessment of the implications of Rio+20 and post 2015 UN development agenda are necessary ingredients for the eleventh session of the Forum to accomplish its mandate to review the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests and to decide on the future global policy architecture on forests.

VII. Recommendations

62. To enable the 11th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) to take a constructive consensus decision on the future arrangement on forests in 2015 in line with major global developments, the Forum may wish to:
a. Decide to establish an ad hoc expert group to review various aspects, components and options for future international arrangement on forests, with, inter alia, a view to making proposals to the eleventh session of the Forum;

b. Decide that the ad hoc expert group should take into full account the interconnections and implications of the post 2015 UN development agenda, Rio20 outcomes and the international arrangement on forests;

c. Further decide that the ad hoc expert group should meet once during the intersessional period between the tenth and eleventh sessions of the Forum;

d. Invite countries, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional organizations and processes to actively participate in the intersessional activities on the future options for international arrangement on forests;

e. Consider inclusion of a cross-cutting sustainable development goal on natural resources which also includes forests to its relevant country representatives in the Rio+20 outcome and the post 2015 UN development agenda consultations, and integration of natural resources in all goals;

f. Invite members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to carry analytical work on “natural capital accounting”;

g. Request the Secretary General to include recommendations on the future international arrangement on forests in its report on the main theme of the eleventh session of the Forum;

h. Invite countries to further invite countries to provide support to the Forum’s Trust Fund to ensure full participation of all stakeholders in the preparatory process, and to enable the Secretariat to carry out the intersessional activities and relevant analytical work and surveys in preparation for the ad hoc expert group and the eleventh session.