Draft Chairman’s Summary of the Roundtable discussion of the high-level segment, 26 May 2005

Round Table II: Forest Law and Governance for Sustainability

H.E. Mrs. Judith Bahemuka, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations moderated diverse and constructive discussion that recognized the fundamental importance of governance for sustainable forest management and the negative link between conflicts and natural resource conservation. In many countries weak governance is associated with poverty. The sharing of rich country experiences identified the numerous actions at international, regional, sub-regional and national levels as potentially useful tools to strengthen forest law and governance for sustainability.

Policy recommendations highlighted in the discussion

The need to strengthen national legislation and enforcement was highlighted as a priority area. Regional initiatives, multilateral and bilateral cooperation and agreements also have a significant role to play in strengthening forest law enforcement and governance.

Clarification and strengthening of tenure and access rights related to forest lands and use was one of the suggested actions. Decentralization and promotion of partnerships between governments, forest owners and communities, industry and trade, and the civil society further contribute to better forest governance.

Another indispensable attribute of good governance is transparency of government contracts and payments related to the use rights of forest resources, as well as of efficient and equitable revenue sharing schemes.

Certification of origin of timber and timber products, chain-of-custody systems and voluntary codes of conduct are important tools in combating illegalities in forestry. On the other hand, market access to legally and sustainably produced forest products, including public procurement rules need to enhanced, together with transfer of technology and sharing of experiences. Provision of adequate means of implementation including capacity building, technical and financial assistance are crucial preconditions for strengthening governance systems.