

OPENING STATEMENT

BY

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IN HER CAPACITY

AS THE

CHAIRPERSON
OF THE BUREAU OF THE SIXTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS
(UNFF)

MONDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2006
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

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*Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Let me start by expressing my sincere gratitude to all of you for electing me as Chair of the Bureau of the Sixth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). I regard this an honour and privilege. I hope I will be able to live up to your expectations. May I now welcome you all to this historic session on the future of forests.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau who were elected today. We have been working together as the Bureau for the past several months, and have held a number of meetings to prepare for this session. I thank the members for their useful ideas and support. We have worked as a very cohesive team, and with the close co-operation and assistance of the Secretariat, have put together a programme for this session.

The Bureau held a number of informal briefings with Member States and benefited from the exchange of views and ideas in planning for the session. I hope the arrangements meet with your expectations and lead to fruitful discussions on the issues of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and the international arrangement to make SFM a reality.

I am pleased to welcome Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. On behalf of the Bureau and myself, we are delighted that you were able to join us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe we should focus on addressing the unfinished business from our session last year. We hardly need to say how important this session is, and the serious responsibility we collectively hold to resolve that unfinished business carried forward from the Fifth Session last May. I am sure you will agree with me, that future actions of the international arrangement on forests should, in real terms, promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, and thereby contribute to the

achievement of internationally-agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. In this regard, I urge the distinguished delegates to bear in mind the call put forth by the 2005 World Summit, which emphasized the cross-sectoral linkages of forests to other sectors, and the potential of Sustainable Forest Management to benefit current and future generations, including through enhanced international co-operation. World leaders have put us on the spot by specifically mentioning the discussions to be held at this session.

My recent interactions with the members show that there is tremendous interest as well as goodwill to make positive progress at this session. In particular, I would like to recognize the country-led initiative, entitled *"Scoping for a Future Agreement on Forests"*, held in Berlin in November, 2005. I believe it will provide the impetus to our efforts to deal with some of the difficult issues on our agenda. I commend the Organizers of the initiative for their contributions to the process.

The members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) have also played an important role leading up to this session. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the continued support of the CPF to the work of the Forum. I laud the spirit of the Partnership, bringing about enhanced co-operation and programme co-ordination among its member organizations, and providing support to countries in implementing the previously-agreed decisions of the Forum.

Distinguished Delegates,

May I now draw your attention to the task before us in the course of the next two weeks. After careful consideration, the Bureau has prepared a Provisional Organization of Work, with the aim of facilitating the efficiency of the meetings during the coming two weeks. I hope that, by the end of this session, we will be able to accomplish these tasks.

I am convinced that this session gives us a unique opportunity to further develop a clear vision on future actions, building on the

objectives and principle functions of the International Arrangement on Forests, as stipulated in ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35. It will also provide a commonly agreed conceptual framework for Sustainable Forest Management as part of a broader development agenda.

I believe that setting clear and ambitious common global goals for Sustainable Forest Management is important. In this regard, the work carried out by the Fifth Session provides an excellent starting point. Translating these noble ideas into actions would require improving the method of work and developing a multi-year programme of work which would address the most pressing policy issues, including those stemming from the regions.

I therefore, urge you to keep the discussion on the issue of “instruments” in perspective; not in isolation. Our main focus should be combating deforestation, promoting Sustainable Forest Management and enhancing the contribution of forests to the broader development agenda, regardless of the discussion on the instrument.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sustainable Forest Management is not an ideal that we can gain without the co-operation of all stakeholders. The Forum values the active engagement of civil society organizations and all major groups. We hope to continuously receive their input and support toward developing a shared vision on the future of the world’s forests. In this context, we have organized a special Major Group Side Event this afternoon. I request all members of the Forum to actively participate in the Event.

I hope that during this session, we will receive a renewed commitment of international co-operation and partnership from all our partners, including the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. I believe we should pursue innovative and new financial mechanisms and increased forest-related ODA to strengthen the implementation of forest policy decisions made by the *AdHoc* IPC/IFF processes and the Forum itself.

I would like to emphasize once again, that the United Nations Forum on Forests provides us with a unique opportunity to advance the agreed global agenda on forests. It is incumbent upon us to use this opportunity to enhance its stronger aspects and correct its shortcomings, so that it can be adopted to meet new realities. I believe that we have not yet fully utilized the potential of this high-level UN body.

I ask you all to join me in extending our appreciation to the countries for their contributions to the UNFF Trust Fund. The resources helped the Secretariat carry out its challenging functions, and also provided travel support to a number of Member States.

In addition, I thank the UNFF Secretariat for its efforts in preparing this meeting.

Distinguished Delegates,

The spotlight is on us. The United Nations Forum on Forests is an instrument to ensure that forest issues remain on top of the global agenda. We need to compromise on individual aims, in the interests of the majority. Co-operation will be crucial. Obviously, each country has its own objectives, but negotiation, by definition, means the inclination to compromise in order to gain agreement and advance our collective interest for sustainable forest management.

On behalf of the Bureau, I urge flexibility, compromise and a spirit of co-operation and understanding, to achieve a solution that unifies our shared vision for a more secure future for all types of forests, for the health of our planet, and for posterity. More than ever before, the responsibility on all of us at this session of UNFF is enormous. In reference to the United Nations, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt stated:

(AND I QUOTE)

“You hear many people say, ‘Why hasn’t the United Nations done this or that?’ The United Nations functions just as well as the member nations make it function, and no better or

worse. And so the first thing to look at is, I think, the kind of machinery that was set up, and what it was meant to do".
(END OF QUOTE)

This aptly applies to the United Nations Forum on Forests, today.

We therefore, have to re-affirm our resolve and commitment to ensuring we have a functioning United Nations Forum on Forests. I look forward to rewarding and successful deliberations.

I Thank You!