

**SEVENTH SESSION OF UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS:
STATEMENT BY ANSAR AHMED, INSPECTOR GENERAL OF
FORESTS, MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS,
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates, I am grateful to the Chair for providing the opportunity to make a statement on behalf of my delegation.

India had formulated its Forest Policy four years before Earth Summit in 1988, which embodies all elements of sustainable forest management. We treat our forests primarily as social and environmental resource, only secondarily as commercial resource. In spite of catering to 16% human population of the globe, we are able to maintain around one fourth of our land mass under forests and tree cover. It is also fact that forests and poverty co-exist and it is difficult to stop the degradation of forests without alleviating the poverty of the people living in and around forests. It has become more relevant to enhance the contribution of forests in alleviating the poverty ,particularly in the forest fringe villages. Keeping this fact into consideration, India has enacted legislation for recognizing habitation and occupation rights on forests for the purpose of forests, wildlife and biodiversity conservation, and alleviating poverty of the people living in and around forests.

Mr. Chairman,

We have been participating actively in the international dialogue on Forests in different processes and committed to the forest principles evolved at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio in 1992, and also reaffirm ECOSOC resolution 2000/35 which states the main objectives of the international arrangement on forests to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The purpose of such an international arrangement would be to promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests, at the national, regional and global levels, to provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global forum for policy implementation, coordination and development, and to carry out principal functions, based on the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Forests Principles for

Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles), Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the Proposals for Action adopted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests .

We also reaffirm that the UNFF with the assistance of the CPF as the key intergovernmental mechanisms to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of SFM at the national, regional and global levels, and stressing the importance of their appropriate strengthening , and sovereign rights over forests and natural resources. We also recognize to enhance the contribution of forests in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Mr. Chairman,

We do recognize that sufficient new and additional financial resources have yet to be channeled to support national policies and programmes aimed at the conservation, management and sustainable development of forests.

We suggest the global objectives of IAF to achieve sustainable development of forests viz (i) to reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management (SFM), including protection, restoration, afforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation;(ii) to enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forests dependant people;(iii) to increase significantly the area of protected forests and other sustainably managed forests, and increase the proportion of forest products derived from sustainably managed forests; and reversing 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 SFM

Mr. Chairman,

We have identified the key gaps as the means of implementation, needed particularly for developing countries to achieve above mentioned strategic objectives as (i) New and additional financial resources for implementing activities for achieving SFM at national level by international community, particularly for developing countries (ii) Creation of

Global Forest Fund to finance implementation of SFM at national level (iii) Transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries (iv) Capacity building of human resource involved in SFM particularly local communities in developing countries (v) GEF should have separate operating para for providing funds to implement activities of achieving SFM and also develop an innovative mechanism to mobilize funds at national level for achieving SFM

We also understand that monitoring and assessment of sustainability of forests is key to achieve the strategic objectives. There is need to develop parameters for the assessment of sustainability of forests, keeping their national needs and priorities into consideration. Even, large number of local communities is also involved in the sustainable forest management. For example, around 8-10 million people are involved in the management, conservation and protection of more than 20 million hectare of forests in India. The capacity of these people needs to be built for achieving SFM including monitoring and assessment of forests on the basis of parameters. Huge resources are needed. It would be difficult for the developing countries to build the capacity of the humane resource involved in SFM without financial resources. The attention of global community is needed to provide financial resources, particularly for developing countries. There would not be any commitment for reporting the assessment of sustainability of forests on the basis of parameters till the capacity of humane resource is built. Keeping these facts into consideration, we support the view to have voluntary reporting. It would not also be appropriate to have peer review of the national reports.

There is need to make efforts at national level also for achieving SFM through involvement of people in forest management and conservation, public private partnership and also promoting research & development programmes. Forests differ from country to country and even diverse ecological, social, cultural and economic dimensions of forests within country itself. Alone global forest policy can not help countries in achieving global objectives of International Arrangement of Forests. Regional Forestry Commission may play important role for assisting countries at regional level. Keeping these facts into

consideration, we support the view to have global meeting every two years and regional meeting at every two years also.

Mr. Chairman,

The UNFF and the CPF have been successful in promoting better understanding of sustainable forest management related issues as well as in facilitating coordination among forest-related instruments and processes. One of the important achievements has been the identification of gaps in the implementation of sustainable forest management, especially in key areas such as the provision of financial resources and transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on preferential terms. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) also recognized the need for creating and strengthening of partnerships and international cooperation to facilitate the provision for increased financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technologies and capacity building to implement sustainable forest management. The future IAF should look to bridge the gaps in the implementation of SFM at national level such as additional financial resources, capacity building and technology transfer.

We also recognize the need to have better coordination between IAF and other multilateral environmental agreements, with a view to facilitating enhanced cooperation and effective implementation of sustainable forests management. More interaction between CPF members and governing bodies of other multilateral environment agreements is desirable.

We understand that UNFF should work as secretariat for the future non legally binding international arrangement of forests (IAF) and review the effectiveness of the instrument in 2015.

The non legally binding instrument (IAF) with universal membership could provide countries with value addition such as (i) political commitment to promote SFM and the achievement of strategic objectives of IAF (ii) coherent conceptual framework for

implementing SFM (iii) greater understanding of SFM(iv) global platform for enhanced cooperation and collaboration (v) strengthening implementation at national and regional level (vi) enhancing the means of implementation for achieving strategic objectives .

Thank You, Mr. Chairman