



**Statement by  
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**AT THE**

**OPENING OF  
THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UN FORUM ON FORESTS**

New York, 16 April 2007

Statement at the  
Opening of the Seventh Session of the UN Forum on Forests  
Mr. Pekka Patosaari, Director, UN Forum on Forests  
New York

Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of our Under-Secretary-General Mr. Jose Antonio Ocampo for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I would like very much to convey his message of support and very best wishes for a successful outcome, to all of you and to our gathering here today, at the seventh session of the UN Forum on Forests.

When the sixth session of the Forum agreed on four shared Global Objectives on Forests last year, it also established a common ground for future work of the UN Forum on Forests. The Global Objectives are indeed a strong political commitment of the member States to advance sustainable forest management, to curb deforestation and to enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of international development goals.

Also the usefulness of the concept of Sustainable Forest Management has been broadly recognized, and the supporting policy framework has been put into practice in many member States, since the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in 1992. Just as the concept of sustainable forest management belongs within the overall conceptual framework of sustainable development, the work of the UN Forum on Forests is part of the UN's wider development policy framework.

Now, at this session, the UN Forum on Forests continues this line of work. The Forum institutionalizes the intergovernmental process and brings together all relevant actors. This is the seventh year that the Forum has been working to provide the necessary policy development, guidance and support to the national implementation of Sustainable Forest Management. Over the past six years, member States have negotiated to establish the institutional framework, and the work of the Forum has, increasingly, become an integral part of the broader development agenda.

Distinguished Delegates,

When formulating national-level forest policies, international agreements cannot give all the answers and the guidance needed. We also need convincing results based on evidence from the field, from research projects, and, right now particularly, concrete recommendations aiming at finding solutions to alleviate poverty and respond to the needs of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

National-level forest policy, to be properly adopted and implemented, must be relevant and understandably beneficial to those at the receiving end. To that end, we need coherent and

predictable forest policies which recognize all forest benefits. Supportive policies and an enabling environment are particularly important in attracting the private sector, and in creating much-needed forest markets and revenues from forest products and services.

To make forests contribute to the overall development of society as a whole, in support of social development, sound management and conservation, and sustainable economic growth, efficient and effective land tenure systems and access to forest resources are of crucial importance, particularly for local and indigenous peoples and communities. When people have better control and ownership of forests, they have greater opportunities to capitalize on forest assets, and even greater incentive to sustain their resources. Thus, effective land tenure systems provide an economic incentive for sustainable forest management.

Good governance and its supporting law enforcement is another critical factor in sustainable forest management. Lack of economic opportunities combined with weak law enforcement often leads to illegal trade. These illegal activities deprive the local forest-dependent community of the possibility of a sustainable livelihood, pushing forest-dependent people further into extreme poverty.

Internal conflicts and illegal harvesting of forest resources tend to go hand-in-hand. Illegally harvested timber is often exported to finance violent activities. Such crises are often beyond the coping ability of national governments, and require intergovernmental support.

These are central elements when considering how to contribute to the highly relevant UN policy on achieving greater coherence and synergies in the United Nations' normative, analytical and operational work. This requires actions toward strengthening productive linkages between the efforts of the Forum and those of the major forest-related international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats that compose the Collaborative Partnership. Correspondingly, it also means that the UN Forum on Forests should pull together a wide range of forest-related processes, institutions and instruments, as well as major stakeholders, to jointly address priority economic, social and environmental issues linked to forests in a much more integrated manner. All these actors - at the national, regional and international levels - have critical roles to play in advancing the concept of Sustainable Forest Management.

A number of regional initiatives, including criteria and indicators processes, regional partnerships and collaborative networks, have been helping to advance these forest policy processes. The regional arms of various UN bodies, including UN regional commissions, have a potential role in building the global-regional interface for the UN Forum on Forests, and to support their mutual coordination and provide their inputs for the implementation of the regional aspects of our work. This new interface could also help to mainstream the regional and sub-regional partners into the broader development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Public awareness and broad participation have critical roles to play in this call to action,

but the real challenge is to move beyond raising awareness. Active engagement and cooperation from all actors is needed, not only to highlight the role of forests in sustainable development, but also to redirect the priorities and channel activities on the ground, in support of the internationally agreed development goals, for positive change, growth and renewal.

When we consider the multitude of forest-related interest groups, the growing concerns for human and intellectual property rights, tensions on the rural-urban interface, and often divergent local-global priorities, it becomes clear that a mechanism is needed for greater interaction between various stakeholders and sectors that impact forests and the forest-dependent poor.

I am sure that the new working modality of the Forum will include mechanisms to deepen global-regional interactions, address emerging priority issues, and strengthen stakeholder engagement. The recent adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the International Year of Forests (2011) provides yet another vehicle for us in the Secretariat to work with member States and relevant forest-related organizations and major groups, to promote public awareness and action in support of SFM efforts, worldwide.

Achieving the international development commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), requires a new, more holistic approach to addressing the inter-linkages between people and our natural resource base. Previous discussions at the Forum have highlighted how forest management is deeply intertwined with other sectors, and requires coordinated inter-sectoral approaches. Discussions at the recent UNFF Ad Hoc Expert Group meeting in December echoed this notion of sustainable forest management as a dynamic process, in which different issues take precedence, due to varying environmental, economic and political realities.

Distinguished Delegates,

This seventh session now has an opportunity to strengthen and broaden the effectiveness of the UN Forum on Forests - and the International Arrangement on Forests. Deciding on a clear and compelling multi-year programme of work for the next eight years will greatly help to secure strong international commitment and accountability on forest issues. With its revised working methods, the Forum should discuss ways to provide better guidance to its many partners for the successful implementation of its policy decisions, as well as means and mechanisms to facilitate implementation.

The Instrument itself will be a turning point, signaling a new era in international forest policy. It will stimulate implementation and invigorate dialogue at global, regional, national and local levels to address emerging issues affecting forests. It will reinforce practical measures at the national level to integrate forests more closely with other cross-sectoral issues. Moreover, it will enhance international cooperation and support for a new people-centered forest policy agenda, with actions for increased pro-poor, pro-nature and pro-growth actions that link trees and forests to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

Thank you.