



**Introduction by
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**DIRECTOR OF THE
UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS SECRETARIAT**

TO THE

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS, 2011

New York, 17 April 2007

Introduction by Mr. Pekka Patosaari, Director, UN Forum on Forests

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Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all, with this beautiful poem and harmony of hope to the launch of preparations for the International Year of Forests, 2011. The song “*Give us Hope*” that you just heard, was performed by the internationally acclaimed Young People’s Chorus of New York City (YPC), and conducted by Mr. Jim Papoulis – they are our special guests today.

As you may know, the General Assembly recently adopted Resolution 61/193 declaring 2011 as the International Year of Forests - IYF. As part of the seventh session, we are gathered here at this momentous occasion to mark the beginning of preparations for the International Year.

Let me particularly welcome seven ministerial authorities, responsible for forests, representing all world regions:

- H.E Mr. Ivica Grbac, Assistant Minister, Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Croatia, the country which initially proposed the IYF,
 - H.E. Mr. Emile Doumba Minister for Forests, Fisheries and National Parks of Gabon,
 - H.E Mr. M.S. Kaban Minister of Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia,
 - H.E. Pembe Didace Bokiaga, Minister of Environment from the Democratic Republic of Congo,
 - H.E. Mr. Jorge Rodriguez, Vice Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica,
 - Ms. Agnieszka Bolesta, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Environment of Poland and
 - Mr. José Cibrián Tovar, Director General of the National Forest Commission of Mexico.
- They are all here to voice their support for a successful International Year of Forests.

I hope that this occasion will also serve as a platform for significant national pledges in support of the Year.

Mr. Shamsul Momen Palash of the “Organization of Art for Children (OACH)”, Proprietor, BanChashi Nursery, a grassroots NGO working with children in Bangladesh, will also make a presentation on his organization’s pledge to initiate a Million Tree Campaign. Mr. Jim Papoulis, composer and founder of “The Foundation for Small Voices”, will help us start off on the right note, as he provide us with his inspiring words and fill us with a sense of hope for the future, as he leads the Young People’s Chorus of New York City with another performance by these small but powerful voices.

Dear Friends,

Many of the challenges faced for the successful promotion of sustainable forest management require a major international stimulus to enhance awareness and mobilize real action. I have full confidence that the International Year of Forests, 2011 will be such a stimulus.

To bring about real change in how our world's forests are managed, broad public participation is vital. Children and youth are the future implementers of sustainable forest management, and thus education can be one of the main tools in raising awareness of nature and forests. A whole year dedicated to celebrating the importance of forests has the potential promote awareness on the multi-faceted nature of sustainable forest management, highlighting the ecological, economic and social aspects of forests.

When declaring 2011 as the International Year of Forests, the UN General Assembly also requested the UNFF Secretariat to serve as the focal point for implementation of the Year. We feel honoured, and take this responsibility very seriously.

We look forward to working in collaboration with Governments, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and international, regional and sub-regional organizations and processes as well as relevant major groups. We stand ready to facilitate initial discussions for effective implementation of the preparations.

We must encourage all actors and stakeholders, at all levels, to find creative ways to mobilize action for a better future with trees and forests. This should be done in a coordinated manner, but letting all the flowers bloom.

I strongly believe that the International Year of Forests, 2011 will add impetus to the calls for national and international actions for the promotion of sustainable forest management. I also hope that it will be a highly effective tool in heightening awareness of the role of forests in the maintenance of our planet's vigour and vitality, as well as in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

A truly worldwide endeavour, occurring close to 20 years after Rio, and ten years after Johannesburg, the International Year of Forests will be a celebration of forests and their importance in our everyday lives. I wish us all a very fruitful preparation and celebration of the International Year of Forests, 2011.

Thank you.