Introduction

The high-level segment is an important component of the multi-year programme of work of the Forum. This session’s high level segment is of particular significance for the following reasons: (i) this is the first high level segment after the adoption of the UN Non-Legally-Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests; (ii) it is being held after the September 2010 MDG High Level Plenary Meeting during which forests received specific recognition in its Outcome Document; (iii) the official launch of the International Year of Forests during this Segment; iv) growing significance of forests in addressing a number of economic, social and environmental challenges, with significant social issues as the focus of this session of UNFF, and, in particular, the recognition of forests’ role in climate change; and (v) proximity to the Rio+20 Conference and its opportunity to provide valuable input to the Conference.

Thus, to maximize the available time of the Ministers and receive their leadership and vision, the High Level Segment has been organized in four round tables with specific topics addressing the session’s overall theme, UNFF’s ongoing work and prevailing international policy processes.

Context

In its resolution A/RES/64/236, the United Nations General Assembly decided to organize, in 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) at the highest possible level. The objective of the Conference, also known as Rio+20, is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges. The focus of the Conference will include the themes of: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and the institutional framework for sustainable development. The Conference is expected to result in a focused political document.
As Agenda 21 highlighted the significance and importance of forests, the Rio+20 Conference also presents a unique opportunity for recognition of the role of forests and their multiple values in sustainable development, including forests contribution to energy, food security, poverty reduction, land degradation, water conservation, biodiversity conservation and climate change. Rio+20 is also an important forum to reiterate the significant role of the UNFF as the most authoritative global forest policy setting body. The outcome of the UNCSD on “forests” should be supportive of the UNFF work and its multi-year program of work, and assertive on the added value brought by the Forum.

The UNFF9 High Level Segment provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate the contributions of forests to the themes of the Rio+20 Conference including the theme on green economy in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development. There is no definition on green economy and the discussions at the roundtable will not aim at defining any specific term. Green economies and the associated policy implications will apply differently across countries, depending on their national circumstances, priorities and capacities. This is particularly true for developing countries whose priorities are poverty eradication. Nevertheless, this high-level roundtable provides an opportunity and a platform for a direct and transparent discussion on various means for advancing forests profile in the Rio+20 Conference, and discussion on the crucial role of forests in building green economies, aiming at eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development.

Objectives

The objective of the round-table discussion is to:

- Explore various ways and means to discuss means for advancing forests profile in the Rio+20 Conference
- Discuss the substantive link between forests and the themes of the Rio+20;
- Raise awareness on multiple values of forests for global development agenda, and to support the work of the UNFF.

Modality

The discussions during the roundtable will be facilitated by a moderator. Ministers and other heads of delegations are strongly encouraged to have interactive discussions under the topic of the roundtable. Prepared country statements, however, are limited to three minutes for individual and pre-registered Member States and five minutes for the representatives of the regional political groups.

Moderator

Mr. Daniel Reifsnyder
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Department of State-United States
Expected Output

A Chairman’s summary of the main issues and ideas highlighted throughout the discussions in the roundtable will be included in the final report of the Session.