High Level Round Table on
Forests for People

High-level Ministerial Segment

Ninth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

Wednesday, 2 February 2010
3:00 p.m.-6 p.m.

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

“Forests for People” is the main theme of this session and, therefore, should be discussed at the highest level.

The history of human existence and civilizations is intertwined with forests and trees. Forests are crucial because of the goods and services they provide, and on which people all over the world are dependent to varying degrees. Forests are deeply rooted in people’s social, cultural and spiritual spheres. Examples of lifestyles intertwined with forests
abound from all continents. Many farming, silvo-pastoral, hunter-gatherer and other land-based livelihoods are linked with forests and its health. A number of religions, faiths and spiritual traditions have links to trees, plants, forests, and animals. In addition, forests and wildlife are the source of folklore and spirituality. The traditional forest-related knowledge accumulated over thousands of years acts both as the fabric of societies and is deeply intertwined with the cultures of indigenous and forest dependent peoples.

Although people in rural areas and residing in or around forests tend to rely more heavily and directly on forests for their livelihoods, the benefits received by urban populations, even if seemingly indirect (raw materials, clean water, clean air, recreation and quality of life), are no less substantial. Forests and trees in cities and nearby countryside are recognized in most societies as providing much needed recreational opportunities and comfort from the stresses of modern life, thus playing an important therapeutic and emotional support role. Forests conjure a sense of purity and closeness to nature. So it is understandable that people around the world are aware of and concerned about high rates of deforestation and forest degradation.

The current session of the United Nations on Forests focuses on the core relationship between mankind and this unique gift of nature. Forests have significant potential to enhance livelihoods, social development and contributions to poverty eradication all over the world. For forests to be a truly sustainable natural resource and to effectively improve the well-being of people, a number of policies and programmes are needed at local, national, regional and international levels. The range of policies and programmes include good forest governance, tenure security, access and benefits, local participation, cross-sectoral and landscape-level policy frameworks, and increased funding and political commitment at all levels in the context of sustainably managed forests. Many emerging opportunities for forests include those related to climate change, payment for ecosystem services, provision of water, and forest landscape restoration, including the critical role of forests with poverty alleviation.

**Objectives**

The objective of the round table discussion is to:

- Provide an interactive platform to share lessons learned, best practices on sustainable forest management (SFM), as well as ways to enhance the benefits of forests and SFM on people’s lives.

- Share policies and legislation in various levels so to promote implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, agreed by the GA in 2007 and the jet instrument on forests that demonstrates a people-centered approach.
• Opportunity to exchange views at the highest level

**Modality**

The discussions during the round table will be facilitated by a senior-level moderator. Ministers and other heads of delegations are strongly encouraged to have interactive discussion under the topic of the round table. Prepared country statements, however, are limited to 3 minutes for individual and pre-registered Member States and five minutes for the representatives of the regional political groups.

**Moderator**

Mr. Mohamed El-Ashry  
Senior Fellow, United Nations Foundation and Former CEO, Global Environment Facility (GEF)

**Expected Output**

A chairman’s summary of the main issues and ideas highlighted throughout the discussions in the round table will be prepared and included in the final report of the Session.