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

Forest-dependent and local communities are important stakeholders and in many different ways can make essential contributions to the implementation of sustainable forest management. At the same time, these stakeholders are also challenged with limited financial resources. Whilst ensuring sustained sources of financing for communities thus appears as an obvious necessity, it also comes with a number of challenges.
Approaches for financing sustainable forest management by forest-dependent communities should go beyond direct allocation of cash to those communities. While the cash dimension is essential in providing resources to the local level, communities are often more effective in implementing sustainable forest management if they also receive resources of a different nature, especially as local economies depend only to a limited extent on cash. These resources include capacity building and organisational training as well as extension and technical training for forest management, producing timber and non-timber forest products, and generating alternative sources of livelihoods.

It is also important at this time to understand the impact of REDD+ on financing for forest-dependent communities. While REDD+ funding represents an unprecedented opportunity to implement sustainable forest management, it also comes with a number of potential side effects. These include the risk that forest-dependent communities might benefit little from additional funding, despite the fact that they often play a crucial role in sustainable forest management. It is crucial to explore ways to ensure that REDD+ benefits forest-dependent communities.

Finance for forest-dependent communities has two characteristics: first, communities have a limited capacity to absorb resources, so large amounts of funds in a short period of time may not be necessary, efficient or desirable. Secondly, given the nature of resources absorbed by communities (which includes capacity building and rural integrated cross-sectoral extension services), results are generally obtained over the long term, requiring funding that lasts from several years to a decade or more. As a result, financing for communities should generally be released in limited quantities but over a long period of time. Enabling forest-dependent communities to implement sustainable forest management takes time.

Objectives

The objective of the roundtable is to:
- Provide a platform for exchanging relevant information on financing for forest-dependent communities, their main sources of financing, the nature of contributions and allocation patterns (to whom and how support should be allocated)
- Share knowledge and lessons learned on the challenges of allocating financial resources to forest-dependent communities; and
- Exchange views and perspectives on these issues

Modality

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

Ambassador Ana Maria Sampaio Fernandez, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations Office in Nairobi.

Expected Output

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