Roundtable 3, “Forests-Plus: A Cross-Sectoral and Cross-Institutional Approach”, held on 3rd February 2011 during the high-level ministerial segment of the 9th session of the UNFF, focused on the inter-linkages and interactions of forests with forces outside the forest sector. The Roundtable was chaired and moderated by His Excellency, Mr. Zainol Rahim Zainuddin, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Kenya. The following countries and organizations made statements during the event: Namibia, France, Mexico, Australia, the Netherlands, Chad, Papua New Guinea (on behalf of Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands), the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). What follows is an overview of the discussion among the Ministers and other high level representatives.

Discussions at this Roundtable focused on sharing experiences and lessons learned on the realities of sustainable forest management and forest policy in the context of cross-sectoral and cross-institutional complexities. In addressing the cross-sectoral dimensions of forests, many participants suggested areas for possible inter-sectoral cooperation. In this regard, several participants stressed the need to better understand the inter-linkages and interactions between sustainable forest management and rapidly evolving policies and measures affecting climate change mitigation and adaptation, energy, agriculture, and water. Participants also acknowledged the significance of forests in addressing economic, environmental and social challenges facing people, and their critical role for food security, sustainable livelihoods and poverty eradication.

At the operational level, several representatives highlighted challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainable forest management from forces outside the realm of the forest sector. Among these, some representatives noted actions to curb cases of illegal harvesting of forest resources and to restrict the importation of illegally logged timber, respectively, through close work with community based forest management projects and capacity building programmes. Ongoing efforts to implement Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) Initiatives were also highlighted. For many Small Island Developing States concerns also focused on climate change induced consequences, namely sea level rise and human health challenges through higher incidences of malaria. Other countries' experiences expressed during the Roundtable to overcome inter-sectoral challenges included programmes encompassing a full range of sustainable forest management activities, inter alia, reforestation activities, a forest fund mechanisms, distribution of incentives at the community level, and legal reforms to recognize the land ownership of communities. Participants also noted the need to address fragmented approaches to forests at the policy and institutional level, bearing in mind that the main threats and impacts to forests lie outside forest sector. In this regard, many participants welcomed the notion of “forests-plus” as an approach embracing forests’ inter-sectoral and inter-institutional complexity. Moreover benefits derived from a cross-sectoral approach, namely in terms of increased budgets for forests, as well as programmatic
synergies, and higher values attached to forests and their conservation were noted. At the same time, some participants referred to coordination through policy-learning and underlined the need for approaching forest-related issues, not only cross-sectorally, but also at different levels of government – municipal, state and national – and involving non governmental organizations, communities, and other key stakeholders.