Ministerial Declaration of the International Year of Forests 2011

1. We, the Ministers meeting at the launch of the International Year of Forests (Forests 2011) underscore that forests are at the intersection of human life and well-being, providing multiple goods and services essential for people and crucial for sustainable development and achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

2. We stress that all types of forests, when managed sustainably, contribute significantly to addressing the complex and interconnected global challenges related to economic development, poverty, energy, food and agriculture, water, climate change, desertification and land degradation, and loss of biodiversity.

3. We underline that at least 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their livelihoods, including 60 million people, mainly local and indigenous communities, who live within them. One quarter of all forests are managed by communities. Forest industries, both formal and informal, employ more than 50 million people and the annual value of international trade in forest products is more than $270 billion, with 20 per cent in developing countries.

4. We acknowledge the efforts undertaken by countries in advancing sustainable forest management at all levels but we are deeply concerned that 13 million hectares of forest continue to be lost each year and underscore the need to reverse this trend, including by addressing the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation.

5. We welcome the adoption of the United Nations Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (U.N. forest instrument) in 2007 as an integrated framework for implementing sustainable forest management and achieving the four shared Global Objectives on Forests contained therein, and recognize initial efforts and pilot approaches by countries to implement it;

6. We stress the urgent need to develop a comprehensive and effective approach for forest financing from all sources, including consideration of a voluntary global forest fund, as well as strengthen capacity building and the transfer of environmentally sound technology, to support the efforts of developing countries, in particular developing countries with special needs and circumstances, to sustainably manage their forests.

7. We also stress the urgent need to promote good governance at all levels, including by empowering local and indigenous communities and women through such means as secure land tenure, meaningful participation in decision-making and benefit sharing;

8. We welcome new and emerging forest-related financing initiatives, as well as the potential for significant new forest funding through climate change initiatives, while recognizing that these programs should address the broader needs of countries and forest
values, not carbon alone, and promote synergies between REDD+ and sustainable forest management activities;

9. We underscore that the United Nations Forum on Forests, with its universal membership and unique mandate, and with the support of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, plays a vital and value-added role in, and makes a significant contribution to, promoting international policy coordination and cooperation to achieve sustainable forest management.

10. We welcome Forests 2011 as a landmark opportunity to highlight the importance of forests to people and build momentum and political will for a continuing process of advocacy, action and partnership to achieve sustainable forest management.

11. We commit to create a new paradigm in addressing forests based on the interaction and crucial linkages between people and forests by:

   a. Engaging actively throughout 2011 to raise awareness and strengthen political commitment and action worldwide on the importance of forests to people and build momentum for the years beyond for a people-centred approach to reducing forest loss and degradation and improving the livelihoods of people, including forest dependent communities, through sustainable forest management;

   b. Developing and implementing cross-sectoral and multi-institutional policies and actions at all levels which advance sustainable forest management;

   c. Leading in the implementation of the U.N. forest instrument through national, regional and international actions and cooperation in order to promote sustainable forest management, achieve the Global Objectives on Forests and enhance the contribution of forests to the internationally agreed development goals;

   d. Strengthening the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests, in particular as related to implementing and reporting on the U.N. forest instrument;

   e. Finding a meaningful and lasting solution on forest financing at the 10th session of the Forum in 2013 as envisaged in the resolution of the special session of the Forum’s 9th session;

   f. Undertaking immediate steps towards implementing the forest-related outcomes of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals agreed in September 2010;

   g. Working through the governing bodies of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, in particular the Rio Conventions, to integrate, as appropriate, the sustainable management of all types of forests into their strategies and programmes, and help ensure coherence, synergies and mutual support, including by
building on well-established forest-related tools, processes, programmes and activities at the national, regional and international levels;

h. Contributing substantively to the Rio+20 Earth Summit and its preparatory process through initiatives on the contributions of forests to the themes and objectives of the conference.

12. We invite the Rio+20 Earth Summit, in recalling the Rio Forest Principles, the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, to:

a. Highlight the multiple economic, social and environmental benefits provided by forests to people and the contribution of sustainable forest management to sustainable development;

b. Underline the need to strengthen the means of implementation in developing countries for sustainable forest management through international financial, technical and scientific cooperation, south-south cooperation and triangular cooperation, as well as to strengthen governance and law enforcement at all levels, including by creating enabling environments for local and indigenous communities through secure land tenure, meaningful participation in decision-making and benefit sharing and by combating illicit international trafficking in forest products;

c. Also recognize the crucial need for cross-sectoral and multi-institutional policies and actions at all levels to realize the contribution of forests to sustainable development; and

d. Reaffirm that the U.N. forest instrument, as the first comprehensive agreement of forests, provides an integrated framework for national action and international cooperation on forests to implement sustainable forest management, achieve the Global Objectives on Forests, and enhance the contribution of forests to achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

13. We agree to meet again at the 11th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in 2015 to review our progress in meeting these commitments, as well as the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests.