

**Opening Statement**  
**by**  
**H.E. Ambassador Martin Sajdik**  
**President of the Economic and Social Council**

**The High-Level Segment**  
**of the 11th Session of the**  
**United Nations Forum on Forests**

**"The Future International Arrangement on the**  
**Forests We Want"**

**13 May 2015,**  
**United Nations Headquarters,**  
**New York**

**Your Excellency Minister Noel Nelson Messone, Chair of  
the UNFF11,  
Dr. Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of the UNFF Secretariat,  
Distinguished Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a pleasure to welcome you to the High-Level Segment of the 11th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF11) on "The Future International Arrangement on the Forests We Want". It is my pleasure, in my capacity as the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, to address the opening meeting.

Fifteen years ago, the Forum on Forests was established by the Council to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, and to strengthen long-term political commitment for this purpose.

Since then, the Forum on Forests has been an indispensable member of the ECOSOC system, as the only global intergovernmental policy body within the UN system with universal membership that holds regular debate on issues related to forests, and provides policy advice and recommendations to its Member States, the UN system and

other stakeholders, including through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

ECOSOC is the principal UN body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals. The institutional relations between the Council and its subsidiary bodies, such as the Forum on Forests, are intended to be complementary and mutually supportive to ensure coherence and synergies in the work of the UN system on economic, social and environmental issues.

I wish to commend the Forum on Forests for its achievements over the years, particularly in raising awareness, strengthening commitment and elevating the role of forests in the global development agenda. Indeed, since its establishment in 2000, much has been achieved by this Forum, particularly through bringing diverse perspectives on sustainable management of all types of forests.

One of the most significant contributions made by the Forum is the agreement on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, also known as the Forest Instrument, which was unanimously endorsed by the Council and subsequently

adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. The impact of the work of the Forum has been visible in other forest-related intergovernmental bodies and processes, as well as sustainable development processes.

In recent years, the Forum has also been successful in integrating the multiple benefits of forests and their contributions to sustainable development into the broader development agenda, including the sustainable development goals (SDGs) proposed by the Open Working Group on SDGs that are currently being considered as part of the ongoing deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda.

The future international arrangement on forests (IAF) should aim to advance implementation of sustainable forest management and contributes effectively to reversing the alarming trend in deforestation. The IAF should harness its full potential to mobilise further political support and resources required to fulfil its objectives. It is equally important that future IAF to mainstream forest and sustainable forest management into sustainable development at the global, regional, national and local levels, including through mainstreaming across sectors, such as agriculture, energy and transportation, just to name a few.

## **Excellencies,**

The Council has recently undertaken far-reaching reform and aligned the work of its broader system, including its subsidiary bodies such as the Forum on Forests, to the main theme of the Council. Such an alignment is intended to help connect the system's policy work more effectively to the High-Level Segment and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) convened under the auspices of ECOSOC.

This year, as the UN system embarks on the post-2015 development agenda, ECOSOC is focusing on supporting the transition to the new development framework through the theme, "Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: What will it take". The HLPF will also address key aspects of this transition through its aligned theme "Strengthening integration, implementation and review - the HLPF after 2015."

I wish to stress that at this critical juncture, institutions at all levels, including those within the ECOSOC system, will need to undertake adaptations to implement the new development agenda, requiring a fundamental change in mindset supported by a clear vision and strong leadership.

As the President of ECOSOC, I am pleased to see that the Forum considers as a high priority the integration of its future arrangement in the broader development agenda beyond 2015, and is undertaking adaptations to the new agenda through its deliberations on the international arrangement on forests (IAF) beyond 2015. A strong UNFF11 Ministerial Declaration will certainly send a signal on the importance to further elevate the profile of forests, and serve as a concrete input to the post-2015 development agenda process.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we consider the post-2015 review architecture, it is imperative to consider how the thematic reviews that will take place in the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC could take into account the work of the subsidiary bodies such as the Forum on Forests.

In this regard, the Forum could provide further contributions to the Council's efforts to support the achievement of sustainable development, if enabled to do so by the strengthened and effective IAF beyond 2015. The Forum on Forests is indeed well-placed to define the role of forests in sustainable development, and contribute to the work of the HLPF by

reporting on the progress in the achievement of forest-related SDGs and targets.

**Distinguished Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

You are approaching the decision on the IAF beyond 2015, and are about to shape the framework for the next fifteen years, including ways to contribute to implementation and review of the post-2015 development agenda.

I look forward to a constructive and energetic policy dialogue on the integration of forests in the post-2015 development agenda, and renewed commitments to the implementation of the IAF beyond 2015.

Thank you.

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