

Opening remarks presented on behalf of

Rene Castro Salazar,

ADG Forestry and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

Co-chairs,

Distinguished experts, dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure for me to address the 1st meeting of the Ad-hoc Expert Group on behalf of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. On a more personal note, I am very grateful for this opportunity because this is the first time that I can address a meeting under the International Arrangement on Forests in my new capacity as Assistant Director-General for Forestry in FAO and chair of the Partnership. Needless to say that I consider both designations as an enormous honour and opportunity to make a contribution to promoting our common quest, the sustainable management of all types of forests of the world. I am taking inspiration from the commitment of all members of CPF, from the invitations and guidance from you, the member States, and the great support and interest of a broad range of stake-holders, and I will work tirelessly in both capacities, together with all of you, to make our goals and objectives a reality.

Dear Colleagues,

Last year we witnessed two milestone agreements in the global dialogue: the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Both are ground-breaking in their respective fields, and the overarching nature of the 2030 Agenda makes it humanity's most ambitious endeavor ever on sustainable development.

While forests are directly addressed in two goals, Goal 6 and Goal 15, there is a growing consensus that forests are relevant for achieving fourteen of the 17 goals. Our task, challenge and opportunity is to take a pro-active approach and make sure that forests not only can contribute to achieving those fourteen goals but that they actually do contribute. We must find the ways to unlock forests' full potential in this regard and convert the political attention and the public expectation into policies, strategies that work, and most importantly, into actions reaching the ground.

In this context I laude the wisdom of UNFF member States for their vision set forth in the outcome of UNFF11. The new cycle of the IAF, aligned with the time-frame of the SDGs, together with the alternating focus of the UNFF sessions offer an excellent framework for a result-oriented international dialogue. While the 15 years until 2030 appear to be a long period, every effort should be made to use time wisely, and the IAF Strategic Plan is an excellent instrument to enable us to do so. This plan should be ambitious enough and also instructive so that the various components of the IAF can develop their own contribution in a fully synergistic manner.

This is particularly important for us, the CPF and its members, because UNFF11 set the bar very high in terms of defining goals, objectives and functions for, and expected contributions by the Partnership. Paragraph 22 of the resolution contains a complex guidance for CPF and I am happy to report to you about the good progress made so far in addressing the various elements of this guidance. Through two working meetings (the second one held just last Sunday) members have put together key elements of a comprehensive proposal for making CPF more efficient, more responsive to the invitations addressed to it, and more effective in delivering on its functions and tasks. While we continue this work towards UNFF12 we are looking forward to receiving the input from AHEG1 and AHEG2 with great expectations, so that the needed coherence called for in paragraph 22(e) of the resolution is fully achieved.

On this note let me to inform you also that CPF is preparing for its retreat suggested for June this year. In the retreat we will consider other key elements of the UNFF outcome, and, taking into account the key messages from the High Level Dialogue of heads of CPF organizations held at the XIV World Forestry Congress, decide on several key strategic and operational issues and short-term priorities to operationalize the guidance received.

In concluding, I would like to stress that the AHEGs, and of course we as CPF, have challenging tasks in front of us. Having consulted the report from the expert meeting conducted with generous support of the Government of Japan in March this year, I noted that, while obviously a broad range of concepts and approaches may exist, there could be an emerging consensus over the key issues. With commitment and result focus, the Working Group and subsequently the special session of UNFF can be presented with a comprehensive proposal for approval and adoption, charting the way for the IAF and its components through the coming period until 2030.

I would like to assure you that CPF will continue to be at your disposal and do everything possible to support the work of the AHEGs and the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

I thank you for your attention.