

**Introductory Remarks by
Ambassador Dehghani, AHEG Co-Chair**

**Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on
Matters referred to in Paragraph 44 of the ECOSOC Resolution 2015/33**

Monday 25 April 2016, UNHQ, New York

Distinguished experts,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As my fellow Co-Chair Mr. Hoogeveen highlighted, on the one hand, while challenging it may be, the tasks are well defined before us. On the other, in the last eleven months since the conclusion of UNFF11 last May, we have witnessed several important developments to carefully consider in undertaking our tasks.

A few months ago in December on the heels of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN General Assembly renamed the “Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests” to the “United Nations Forest Instrument”, and extended the timeline of the Global Objectives on Forests to 2030, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

This was an important initial step to materialize the historic outcome of the UNFF11. In fact, this meeting of the expert group represents a vital opportunity to consider how best to further integrate the 2030 Agenda into the work of the Forum and beyond in the context of the new international arrangement on forests.

Indeed, we are meeting at a critical juncture of the initial phase of the new IAF, to translate its aspirations into an actionable plan to guide its work for the next thirteen (13) years, building on the legacy of the original IAF and advancing it further in accordance with the outcome of the UNFF11.

Now is the time to bring pieces together, by integrating forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and its associated targets, particularly those under SDG15 and SDG6, the Global Objectives on Forests, and the list of national actions and international cooperation measures contained under the UN Forest Instrument, to develop a holistic approach to the strategic plan.

What we need to develop is a coherent approach across forest-related objectives, targets and commitments, to effectively guide and catalyze further actions for sustainable forest management on the ground by all actors and partners.

In doing so, I would like to stress the importance to take into account recent developments related to forest-based mitigation and adaptation activities, REDD+ and the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), resulting from the Paris Agreement on climate change, as well as forest financing from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

These major outcomes as well as their follow-up and implementation mechanisms need to be fully digested to identify synergistic actions and measures to be taken by the various IAF components in the context of the strategic plan, including concrete measures to promote a comprehensive and integrated approach to forests in partnership with the Rio conventions.

In this regard, it is critical for the IAF to explore possibilities to maximize and tap into the potential of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network in support of these activities, closely collaborating with partners such as the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, including through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

Let me remind that the 2030 Agenda rightly places forests and sustainable forest management as an integral part of the SDGs in its own right. In the coming months, Member States are poised to provide clarity on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level in advance of the 2016 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July. Regardless of the eventual modalities, the Forum, as a functional commission of ECOSOC, has an important role to contribute to the global reviews.

Guided by these important developments, let us use this opportunity to propose concrete ideas on how the IAF can enhance cooperation, coordination and political commitment at all levels to promote the implementation of sustainable forest management.

It is undeniable that the international community will greatly benefit from a robust strategic plan to serve as a roadmap for actions, ensuring the contribution of forests to the well-being of present and future generations.

I look forward to a productive discussion. I now invite Dr. Manoel Sobral Filho, Director of the UNFF Secretariat, to deliver some introductory remarks.
