

**Introductory Remarks by
Mr. Hans Hoogeveen, 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,

On behalf of my fellow Co-Chair and on my behalf, I extend to all of you a warm welcome to the first meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group.

I will begin by outlining the tasks of the expert group. My fellow Co-Chair Ambassador Dehghani will address key developments and areas for consideration in undertaking our tasks.

We are all aware that the main task of the expert group is to develop and submit proposals for consideration by the working group of the Forum on matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33.

These matters contained in the resolution include: i) replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in the UN Forest Instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and ii) the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020.

I wish to remind that these tasks before us present an unprecedented opportunity to embark on a new path for the international arrangement on forests (IAF) to improve and strengthen its functioning, building on and consistent with the outcome of the UNFF11.

In particular, our work should form a firm basis to develop the strategic plan that guides the IAF and its components to ensure consistency among them, and promote coherence and synergies on all things related to forests across sectors and partners.

In doing so, we should be mindful that the IAF is now comprised of the UNFF Member States, the Forum and its Secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the UNFF Trust Fund and the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network. In addition, regional and subregional organizations, as well as major groups and other stakeholders also constitute an important piece in the new IAF.

In short, what we need to develop is a strategic framework to collectively achieve the objectives of the IAF, in which all the IAF components and stakeholders come together and play their respective roles to advance actions for sustainable management of all types of forests at all levels.

What is fundamental to such a framework is a clear mission and vision, as well as the implementation and review framework that clearly delineates priority actions and indicates resources needs. The strategic plan should also guide the work of the Forum along its new

schedule, with its odd-year sessions focusing on implementation and technical issues, and even-year sessions on policy issues.

The development of such a guiding framework entails careful consideration to many elements in a short period of time accorded to the group. In this regard, in response to the invitation to submit their views and proposals on the matters under consideration, 34 responses were received from countries, international, regional and subregional organizations, as well as major groups. These submissions have been made available online by the Secretariat, as individual responses, and as a compilation document.

I wish to encourage us to make full use of all inputs available to us, including a background study “Elements for the Preparation of the Strategic Plan 2017-2030”, commissioned by the UNFF Secretariat, and a summary of the expert panel on the IAF Strategic Plan that took place last month in March in Tokyo, hosted by the Government of Japan.

I will now turn to Ambassador Dehghani, my fellow Co-Chair, to address key developments for our consideration in undertaking the tasks of the AHEG.
