

**Monday, 24 February 2014**

**AHEG Co-Chairs**

**Opening Session of AHEG1 - 24 February 2014**

Ambassador Kamau, Chair of the UNFF11 Bureau,

Professor Judi Wangalwa Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for Environment,  
Water and Natural Resources of Kenya,

Assitant Secretary General Gass,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for entrusting us with the responsibility to successfully guide you through this important exercise. We are honoured by your confidence in our ability to chair this meeting and look forward to the challenge.

We now invite the meeting to turn to item 3 of the provisional agenda, entitled “Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters”. The annotated provisional agenda for the meeting is contained in document E/CN.18//20014/1.

Are there any comments on the provisional agenda?

May I take it that the meeting wishes to adopt the provisional agenda as set out in document E/CN.18/AEG/20014/1?

We hear no objection, so the agenda is adopted.

Let us now remind ourselves of the key intersessional activities of the review of the international arrangement on forests (IAF). The first component is to solicit views from countries and other relevant stakeholders on the IAF. In this regard, in June 2013, countries, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, its member organizations, other relevant organizations, relevant regional and subregional forest-related mechanisms, institutions, instruments, organizations and processes, major groups and other stakeholders were invited to submit views and proposals on the IAF to the secretariat. In total, 46 responses were received which have been made available online, as individual responses, and as a compilation document. This compilation is included in the CD which has been distributed to all participants.

The second component is to carry out an independent assessment of the IAF. Members of this team are present here and we will soon hear a progress report by the Co-Facilitators on the work of the team.

The third component of the intersessional activities is the work of this expert group, tasked with reviewing the performance and effectiveness of the IAF. UNFF10 mandated us to perform this review, in accordance with relevant resolutions of ECOSOC and the Forum, as well as the multi-year programme of work of the Forum. We should also take into account the connection with and implications of the continuing deliberations on the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

The AHEG mandate is to review all relevant inputs and suggestions regarding the IAF, as well as the final report by the independent assessment team, and based on this review at its second meeting, provide its recommendations to UNFF11 on the future of the IAF.

The discussions and outcome of this first meeting of AHEG will inform the continuing work on the independent assessment and serve as a basis for further reflection by the expert group in preparing for its second meeting. It should be noted that the substantive outcome of AHEG1 is a co-chairs summary and there will be no negotiated outcome or agreed conclusion for this meeting. This will facilitate an open and in-depth discussion on all issues in the agenda of AHEG, with the involvement of all experts, the IAF team, Members of the UNFF11 Bureau and other participants.

Let us now explain the organization of our work, and the activities that we will jointly engage in during this week. As you see, we are going to have plenary sessions, as well as parallel working group meetings. Today, we will only meet in plenary session. After our remarks, we will continue with the introduction of documents for the meeting and some explanation on the process by the UNFF Secretariat. Then we will listen to a progress report on the work of the IAF Team by the two co-facilitators, to be followed by a short Q&A session.

This afternoon, the plenary session is devoted totally to interventions by those countries and stakeholders who have submitted their written input, to briefly explain the key points of their input.

Tomorrow and Wednesday, we will start our work at plenary at 9 am in the morning and 2pm in the afternoon. The duration of each of these plenary sessions is only one hour, during which you will hear presentations on various topics related to our tasks. After the presentations, discussions on the same topic will continue in two parallel working groups to allow for more thorough deliberations on the topic. At 4:30 pm, we will come back to the plenary to hear an oral summary by the co-chairs of the key points raised during the day.

Thursday morning is devoted entirely to the plenary session. During this session, two eminent keynote speakers will address the plenary on the way forward for the future of the IAF, as well as its interconnection with the SDGs and post-2015 UN development agenda. You will have the opportunity to interact with the speakers and exchange views, after they make their speeches. There will be no formal plenary or working group meetings on Thursday afternoon. This time is entirely devoted for the meetings of members of the Independent Assessment Team with their respective regional groups. We will inform you later of the exact rooms for these meetings.

As indicated earlier, the report of the AHEG contains only a co-chairs' summary of the substantive discussions during the week. There will be no negotiated outcome. We will try our best to provide you with the draft co-chairs' summary which will be annexed to the AHEG report, as soon as the substantive discussion is over. At the end of the Thursday morning session, we will inform you of the arrangement for distribution of the co-chairs' summary. In any case, hard copies of the co-chairs' summary will be available in this room on Friday morning at 9 am. The plenary will begin at 10 am to receive any factual correction to the co-chairs' summary.

In the afternoon, the participants will take note of the co-chairs' summary of the discussions and adopt the report.

So, we hope you are fine with these arrangements for our work during this week. Of course, we may need to adjust the work programme depending on needs.

We see no questions, so the provisional organization of the work of the AHEG1 is adopted.