

**Message from the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat**

**Round Table on Topics for the 7<sup>th</sup> FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference**

**Cuenca, Spain, 4 – 5 November 2014**

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here and to update you on two very important themes related to the international forest arena: the review of the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests – IAF, which includes UNFF, and the state of negotiations regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

As you know through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 2006/49, the Forum decided that the effectiveness of the international arrangement on forests would be reviewed in 2015, during UNFF's eleventh session – UNFF11. To that effect UNFF, at its tenth session – UNFF10 – approved a resolution through which the members of the Forum agreed on a series of intersessional activities to enable UNFF11 to make a sound decision on the future of the IAF. These intersessional activities include:

- (a) Submissions by all relevant stakeholders;
- (b) An independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests; and
- (c) An open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the international arrangement on forests post-2015.

Regarding the submissions, the feedback provided by our stakeholders is really overwhelming. Of course, the IAF in general and UNFF in particular can and should improve, but there have been significant achievements, as well. The earlier submissions, which can be found at our website, were discussed during the first meeting of the Open-Ended Ad Hoc Expert Group on the IAF: AHEG 1, which met in Nairobi from 24 to 28 February 2014. The Co-Chair's summary of the very rich discussion we had during those five days can be found at our website. We invited Member States to present additional submissions and the deadline is 5 December.

I will come back to the Ad Hoc Expert Group, but first I would like to talk about the Independent Assessment of the IAF. The objective of the Independent Assessment, which is also available on our website, is to assist and inform the AHEG in preparing for UNFF11. With that in mind, five known and competent international consultants, chosen by Member States in their respective regional groups, provided an in-depth evaluation of UNFF, the Forest Instrument, CPF, the UNFF Secretariat, forest financing and the facilitative process and UNFF in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

According to this report, a post-2015 IAF is proposed to deliver two central functions: i) securing effective stewardship of forests in the global sustainable development agenda at the policy-making level; and ii) being the umbrella/coordination/global framework, promoting and facilitating sustainable management of all types of the world's forests. In order to deliver on these functions, the report emphasizes that a post-2015 IAF must be built upon well-defined building blocks that together form a forest governance platform, and based on these building blocks, the Team considered a full range of options for the future IAF, identifying the following as the most feasible and practical:

- (1) Proposed option 1 enhances the current IAF and includes the updating of the Forest Instrument through an Addendum, biennial meetings of a forest assembly UNFA under ECOSOC with an implementation focus, meetings at the regional level, creation of a new mechanism for a science-policy interface, creation of the position of Special Envoy of the SG on Forests and the development of three UN Trust Funds, including a strategic trust fund, and a strengthened DESA-based UNFA Secretariat equipped with increased human and financial resources;
- (2) Proposed option 2 includes the elements of proposed option 1 and the creation of a strong self-standing UN institution in charge of the science-policy implementation interface with a mandate to generate knowledge, independently inform forest policy-making and support implementation of SFM;
- (3) Proposed option 3 builds on the elements of proposed option 1 and includes a parallel political track for Member States that voluntarily commit to the Forest Instrument and for other Member States that commit to a legally-binding treaty with country-based targets to achieve SFM for all forest values; and
- (4) Proposed option 4 is a variant of proposed option 3 and includes a global level arrangement and regional level agreements.

There are also Country-Led Initiatives – CLIs – being organized by Member States of the Forum, such as the workshop that took place in Beijing, China, last week. Its report can be found at our website, and the major topics covered by the workshop included the strengthening of regional/subregional involvement in the IAF; strengthening the role and functioning of the CPF; strengthening the involvement of Major Groups and other stakeholders in the IAF; up-scaling the Facilitative Process under the IAF, and possible elements of a “strategic plan” for the IAF.

I now would like to come back to the Ad Hoc Expert Group and remind you that its second meeting, AHEG 2, will take place in New York from 12 to 16 January 2015. AHEG 2 will review the inputs provided by various stakeholders, as well as the outcome of the work of the independent assessment of the IAF and the discussions that occurred during AHEG 1; the experts will then put forth a set of recommendations providing a strategic direction on the function and institutional arrangements of the IAF for the period beyond 2015 to UNFF11. Based on the outcome of AHEG2 and other inputs, UNFF11 should adopt a resolution on the future of the IAF. Ministers attending the HLS of UNFF11 are also expected to adopt a Ministerial Declaration. It should be noted that the deadline for submission of building blocks for the UNFF11 Ministerial Declaration to the Secretariat is 30 January 2015.

Colleagues,

Forests received significant attention in the discussions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and among the proposed 17 SDGs, the role sustainable forest management may play in an effective and stronger post-2015 development agenda is highlighted. Forests are addressed directly under SDG6 and SDG15, which mentions forests in its title; the pertinent targets are 15.2, related to SFM, and 15.b, which deals with means of implementation for SFM. Moreover, targets 6.6 and 15.1 show the multiple functions of forests, in particular, regarding water supply. The proposal of the OWG on SDGs will be the basis for integrating SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda.

As you know, the post-2015 development agenda should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development, integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner, which should require a single framework and set of goals that are universal in nature and applicable to all countries, while taking into account differing national circumstances, and respecting national policies and priorities. In addition, the agenda should also promote peace and security, democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equality and human rights for all.

The proposal of the OWG on SDGs will be the basis for integrating SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda. The Rio+20 outcome document "The Future We Want" also recognized the need for significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, and mandated an Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF) to prepare a report proposing options for an effective sustainable development financing strategy, to facilitate the mobilization of resources and their effective use in achieving sustainable development objectives.

Now the Secretary-General is expected to synthesize the full range of inputs, including the outcomes of the OWG on SDGs and the ICESDF, and present a synthesis report before the end of 2014 to serve as a basis for the intergovernmental discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. The Co-Facilitators of the process were recently appointed by the President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly, and are Ambassador David Donoghue (Ireland) and Ambassador Macharia Kamau (Kenya). They are mandated to lead open, inclusive, and transparent consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, and the organization and modalities for the negotiations are expected to be announced in due course.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a result of active involvement of the forest community, forests are now integrated in the SDGs to a relatively acceptable level. The convergence of the discussions on the future of the IAF and the post-2015 development agenda presents another unique opportunity to integrate multiple values of forests in the broader context of the development agenda. A successful resolution on the future IAF and a strong UNFF11 Ministerial Declaration will ensure such integration. To this end, we encourage all of you to actively participate in the upcoming meeting of AHEG2 and the UNFF11 session.

Thank you.