

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Minister Nelson Messone,
Chair of the UNFF11 Bureau
Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on
Forests
Monday, 12 January 2015, United Nations Headquarters, New York**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Experts,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Chairman of the Bureau of the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF11), it is my pleasure to address the Second Meeting of the Open-Ended Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG2) on the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF). AHEG2 is the final preparatory step that we are collectively undertaking in advance of the UNFF11 in May 2015.

After extensive work over the last twenty months, and as a result of the implementation of the agreement in UNFF10, major analytical and substantive work has been carried out and numerous suggestions and options have been put forward in AHEG1, the IAF report, the report of the Chinese CLI, and by countries and other stakeholders. Reviewing the suggestions emanating from these intersessional activities indicates that we have an unprecedented and positive basis to shape a solid post-2015 IAF at UNFF11. The intersessional activities also highlighted the fact that the commonalities among countries on the way forward for the post-2015 IAF are more than at any time before.

The pace of developments at the international level has also never been as conducive as today to integrate forests into other major processes. As you know, the international community is at a critical stage of designing an effective, people-centered development agenda for the period beyond 2015, with sustainable development at its core. It is also anticipated for 2015 to be a milestone year, in light of an expected climate change deal in Paris, in December 2015.

The coincidence of all these important events provides a golden opportunity for AHEG2 and Member States of the Forum, while designing the future IAF, to take a proactive

role in influencing the post-2015 development agenda process so as to ensure that forests are placed high in the outcome of the September 2015 Summit. We cannot afford to lose this unique opportunity.

A strong outcome of AHEG2, and solid outcomes of UNFF11 on the future IAF, would lead to higher placement of forests both in the post-2015 development agenda and post climate change agenda. The resolution, together with a strong UNFF11 Ministerial Declaration, will positively impact the negotiation on the draft outcome of the September UN Summit, which will begin at the end of May 2015. On the contrary, a weak outcome of UNFF11 would adversely impact the positioning of forests and their integration in the post-2015 development agenda, losing an opportunity that would not happen again soon.

Distinguished Participants,

There has been a constant call throughout the intersessional period that the future IAF should effectively advance implementation of SFM, and make a real impact on the policies and measures related to forests at all levels. Responding to these legitimate calls cannot be done by merely changing the name of the UNFF, or making it just a venue for dialogue. At the same time, it is evident that maintaining the status quo is not an option, anymore. Through the UNFF11 resolution, we need to strengthen and devise a more effective, influential and proactive post-2015 IAF that is tailored to address the existing and emerging needs and demands. If we are all serious about this, we should also accept the implications, whether financial or institutional, of a strengthened IAF. It is not possible to agree to strengthen the future IAF without the acceptance and commitment to devote necessary resources to it.

In making your recommendations on the future of the IAF as well as the elements of the UNFF11 resolution on this matter, it is of vital importance to keep in mind that the UNFF11 resolution should be the framework for concrete agreements on the design, function, and future direction of all components of the IAF. This resolution should include concrete agreements and measures on strengthening implementation and financing of SFM, financing of the post-2015 IAF institutions, including the Forum and its Secretariat, and the ways and means for improving the engagement of major groups and regional stakeholders. The UNFF11 resolution should also provide guidance on the future direction of the CPF and

specify its decision on the future of the Forest Instrument, and the development of the work plan or strategic plan. Of course, if the Forum agrees to develop a strategic work plan and to update the Forest Instrument, the content of the strategic plan, or the actual consultation on updating the Forest Instrument can be done in the intersessional period, after the September 2015 Summit. In this manner, we will also ensure full coherence with the post-2015 development agenda outcome.

Dear Colleagues,

These are the priority issues upon which all of us need to focus and to reach solid and positive conclusions, in the remaining time now, and during UNFF11. To this end, I invite all of you to use this AHEG2 meeting to narrow down the scope and number of options and actions to those that are most efficient, practical and politically feasible. It is imperative for all of us to ensure a successful outcome for AHEG2, paving the way for a solid and forward-looking resolution on the future IAF and a strong Ministerial Declaration at UNFF11.

Let us further our agreement on a stronger and improved IAF which will serve all. I wish us all a very fruitful and successful meeting.

Thank you.