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**Statement by Mr. Andrey Vasilyev
Deputy Executive Secretary
of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**at the Seventy-second session of
Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry**

Kazan, 18 November 2014

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues,

I would like to start by saying thank you to our hosts, the Government of the Russian Federation and in particular the Ministry of the Natural Resources, the Federal Forest Agency, as well as the Government of the Republic of Tatarstan for hosting us and providing the fine hospitality. We are grateful for all of your efforts to make us feel welcome in Kazan. In addition, many thanks to FAO for their cooperation through the Forestry and Timber Section. Our joint work is getting stronger and more recognized by our member States.

I am extremely happy to see the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry meeting here in Kazan. Forests are an integral part of the national identity and the economy of the Russian Federation. In fact, it is almost impossible to put into words the significance of the Russian forest. Consider that if you boarded a train in St. Petersburg and travelled continuously for six and one-half days across seven time zones to Vladivostok, you would witness roughly 9,000 kilometers of continuous forest, the width of which is roughly 1,000 km on average. If you took a direct flight, you would still be 11 hours above this forest.

It is fitting that we came here to discuss the forest sector's role in a green economy and the role of forests in the post 2015 agenda on Sustainable Development Goals.

Even in the mid-19th century, Aleksandr Yefimovich Teploukhov (a famous Russian forester born east of here, near Perm) wrote, *“there is a common belief, and one that is fatal to forests, that the capital gained from cutting the whole forest at once and invested will bring more profit than the gradual use of the forest. Lack of proper management is a sore spot in forestry, where the only effort made is to develop storage and trading... But with this type of usage, the forest soon becomes a desert, and our children will never have what their parents had. The forest must be like a bank that will never go bankrupt...”*



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Another prominent Russian forester, Aleksandr Felitsianovich Rudzky, also of the 19th century wrote the following regarding forest policy, “*Forest regulation can be firmly established only when its importance is recognized, when we are convinced that it is not a luxury, but, on the contrary, a necessity for creating proper practices in our forests... “The forest is capable of fulfilling not only man's material needs, but also many ethical needs... The idea of humans as a being interested only in meeting their bodily requirements is undoubtedly false...”*

Thus, Teploukhov and Rudzky, forestry leaders of the 19th century, were very much committed to move the forest sector into the green economy and recognized the utility of the forest for giving us much needed materials, but also other ethical needs; and only when we provide for the wellbeing of the forest itself.

This week we have a wide and comprehensive work programme, which closely follows the theme chosen for this event “*Forest Matters: From Plan to Action*”. We will hear from Ms. Renate Christ, Secretary of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the role that forests can play in reducing the impact of climate change. We will see how forest products have a strong role to play in offering sustainable products, which join together the aspects of both material needs and ethical needs.

The Rovaniemi Action Plan for a Forest Sector in a Green Economy, which is the only vision document approved by member States on sustainable use of the forest, provides a road map for UNECE region forest management and use. And tomorrow, we will learn what some member States are doing to put the plan into action, and hopefully have informative and fruitful discussions on these activities.

We will hear some discussion on fabrics based on wood fibre, which were showcased last spring in Geneva during the Forests for Fashion event and that now need action in order to place sustainable wood fibre as a viable and green source for the global fabric market. The market share of wood-based fabrics is still modest at 6% of global fabric use, but there is significant potential to grow in the \$1.7 trillion dollar per year global fashion apparel industry.

Green building with wood will be another important topic, with discussion centered on what are the implications on wooden construction from public policies on sustainable building materials. Here again, there is a great deal of potential to increase the market share for wood, as a replacement for less sustainable building materials such as concrete and steel.

Currently, it is estimated that new dwellings in Europe are constructed with slightly less than one cubic metre of wood on average. Contrast this statistic against regions where wooden construction is the norm; for example North America, where the quantity of wood used per new dwelling is about six times greater (for apartments), and almost forty times greater for single family homes.

These developments have strong implications for the forest sector, not only as they relate to potential markets, but also by showing all stakeholders that material and ethical needs are united under sustainability.

Our stakeholders include: people who use forests; love forests for their beauty; work in the forest; use forest products; and simply enjoy wildlife, clean air, water and the livable environment and climate provided by forests. In fact the list of stakeholders is everyone and we can talk endlessly about plans, but where we can truly stand out is by continuing to put the *Rovaniemi Action Plan* into practice and measuring the results.

In this regard, I would like to conclude by inviting you all to carry on implementing the principles of the *Rovaniemi Action Plan*, so that forests can continue as Teploukhov envisioned “*a bank that*



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will never go bankrupt”.

I wish you a successful meeting and I remain at your disposal during the course of the discussions.