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THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS SECRETARIAT
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
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Message from the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat

72nd session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Kazan, 18– 21 November 2014

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you on behalf of the United Nations Forum on Forests – UNFF Secretariat. First of all, I would like to express to the Government of the Russian Federation, as well as the authorities of the Tatarstan Republic, our appreciation for hosting this meeting in the historical city of Kazan. The venue could not be more appropriate for the important discussions we will have in the next days, especially regarding the role that the forest sector can play in a Green Economy, since Kazan and its surrounding region combine a high technology industrial park with an unwavering commitment to the promotion of sustainable forest management. Thank you so much for your generous hospitality; it is a pleasure to be here.

I also seize this opportunity to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe – UNECE, for the kind invitation, and our colleagues from the joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section for your hard work in helping to organize this meeting, as well as for drafting the very informative reports which provide solid input for our deliberations.

Finally, I acknowledge the presence of our partners from the Collaborative Partnership on Forests –the CPF; in particular, the Food and Agriculture Organization, which has been a closer collaborator with UNFF since the beginning.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we gather here to discuss the European forest sector, it is important to take into account what is happening in the international forest arena. These are indeed very exciting times, since we are reviewing the effectiveness of the International Arrangement on Forests – the IAF, which includes the UNFF.

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, and based on this review, will decide on the future of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015. Accordingly, and in line with the multi-year programme of work adopted in 2007, the overall theme of UNFF11 is, "Forests: progress, challenges and the way forward for the international arrangement". The Forum also recognized the need for thorough preparations, to enable the Forum to take an informed decision at its eleventh session. UNFF11 will be held from 4-15 May 2015 in New York. The UNFF11 High Level Segment of UNFF11 will be held on 13 and 14 May. According to the decision of its Bureau, UNFF11 should have two negotiated outcomes, namely, a resolution on the future of the IAF beyond 2015, and a ministerial declaration.

In preparation for UNFF11, the Forum, at its tenth session (UNFF10), approved a resolution which states regarding the review, that the Forum will consider a full range of future options, including a legally binding instrument on all types of forests, strengthening of the current arrangement, continuation of the current arrangement and other options, based on an evaluation of the following elements:

(a) Past performance of the Forum and its processes, including ad hoc expert groups and country-led initiatives, in addition to future options for the Forum;

(b) The non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and other options referenced in the aforementioned resolution of the Economic and Social Council, including progress towards achieving the four global objectives on forests, which should include a review of the relationship of the instrument with international conventions that have a bearing on the mandate of the Forum;

(c) The Forum secretariat;

(d) Both the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its contribution to the work of the Forum, and related activities by individual member organizations of the Partnership in support of the Forum;

(e) Means of implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and relevant subsequent resolutions, and the facilitative process in this regard;

(f) The Forum within the context of the United Nations sustainable development framework, including the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015/post-2015 development agenda.

The input to be presented to Member States for a decision on the future of the IAF at UNFF11 will be come mainly from the following three main components:

(a) Submissions by 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;

(b) The independent assessment of the international arrangement on forests;

(c) The open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) on the international arrangement on forests.

Let's start by the submissions from our stakeholders. The feedback provided by our stakeholders was really overwhelming and profoundly honest. These submissions 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. AHEG1 reviewed these views and other relevant inputs. The discussion at AHEG1 made it clear that UNFF has had important achievements since its inception and is making a strong

impression. Nevertheless, there is room for change and improvement. The key points coming out of AHEG1 focused on an assessment of the current IAF, its achievements, strengths and weaknesses, and options for action and improvement. The report of this meeting, as well as the Co-Chair's summary of the very rich discussion we had during those five days can be found at our website.

In July 2014, the Bureau of UNFF11 decided to give a second opportunity to Member States and other stakeholders to provide additional views on the future of the IAF by 5 December 2014. To this end, we expect additional submissions from countries, as well as our CPF partners. In this regard, we encourage all of you to take advantage of this opportunity and to provide your views to the UNFFS by the deadline of 5 December. These views will be submitted to the second meeting of the ad hoc expert group (AHEG2) on the IAF (12-16 January 2015, New York). I will explain later about this meeting.

Dear Participants,

As you may be aware, in line with the UNFF10 resolution, the performance of the IAF was recently assessed by a team of five independent consultants representing each of the UN regional groups. The report of the independent assessment was finalized in mid-September, as originally planned, and is available on the UNFF website. I understand that one of the members of the independent assessment team is present at this meeting and will provide you with sufficient details on the findings and recommendations of the Team on the future of the IAF.

In summary, the report analysed the achievements, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the IAF since 2002. It also assessed the impact of the UNFF's work and the sustainability of actions, and made recommendations for a future arrangement.

The IAF Independent Assessment Team basically concluded that the current International Arrangement on Forests has effectively raised the profile of forests. Forests are now part and parcel of global development solutions to challenges such as climate change. Forests have also been recognized as an integral part of the sustainable development agenda, and as mentioned earlier, are highly placed among the proposed Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). Nevertheless, the Team identified a number of areas for improvement and the necessary building blocks for a more effective international arrangement beyond 2015. Building on its achievements, the Team proposes a post-2015 IAF 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. Regardless of which option, options or combination of options to be chosen, the Team has identified key building blocks for the future IAF. The Team also has identified four options as the most feasible and practical options for the future of 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. After one year of very thorough and solid preparations, and having as input the evaluations of our stakeholders, as well as the deep and thoughtful assessment elaborated by a team of renowned international consultants, and the outcome of recently concluded Country Led Initiative in China on the future of the IAF, the experts present at AHEG 2 will have a high quality basis for their deliberations.

AHEG 2 will review all above-mentioned inputs, as well as any other relevant input. Based on this review, the experts will put forth a set of recommendations to UNFF11, providing a strategic direction to the function and institutional arrangements of the IAF for the period beyond 2015. In this regard, the focus of AHEG2 will be on key actions and options for consideration by the Forum, to facilitate an action-oriented, forward-looking discussion on the post-2015 future IAF. The Bureau of UNFF11 has recently agreed on the organization of work of AHEG2. The organization of work of AHEG2 will soon be posted on the UNFF website.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Forests play a central role in our efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. In this regard, it is fortunate that forests received significant attention in the discussions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and the proposed SDGs show the role sustainable forest management (SFM) may play in an effective

and stronger post-2015 development agenda. 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. This is a very important development and will certainly serve as an input for our deliberations and the critical decision of UNFF11 on the future of the international arrangement on forests (IAF) beyond 2015.

As a result of the 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 meetings of AHEG2 and the UNFF11 session.

The UNFF Secretariat hopes to welcome all of you to New York both in January and in May 2015.

Thank you.