

**Statement by the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat**

**28<sup>th</sup> Session of the North American Forest Commission of the**

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - FAO**

**12-14 January 2016 | Campeche, Mexico**

Excellences,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for the United Nations Forum on Forests - UNFF Secretariat to address FAO's 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the North American Forest Commission. I would like to thank the Government of Mexico, our host, for its gracious hospitality, as well as FAO's Secretariat for their hard work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Late last year the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in New York, and Sustainable Forest Management - SFM will be an important instrument in the effort to end poverty, and to promote prosperity and people's well-being while protecting the environment, by 2030. Forests are essential to the implementation of this post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which, in its Goal 15, enshrines the objectives of protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss. The sustainable management of forests is also vital for the achievement of several other goals, such as achieving food security, and sustainable agriculture and the sustainable management of water, as well as in the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. In this regard, please note that last December the United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution which extended the timeline of the Global Objectives on Forests to 2030, in line with the timeline of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In May 2015 UNFF Member States also decided to strengthen the International Arrangement on Forests - the IAF - which is composed of the UNFF and its Member States, the UNFF Secretariat, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the UNFF Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network and the UNFF Trust Fund. In particular, the 11th Session of the UN Forum on Forests - UNFF11 - stressed the need for the IAF to foster further coherence on forest-related policies, catalyze implementation and financing for SFM, and to promote collaboration and coordination on forest issues at all levels, as well as coherence between the IAF and the post-2015 development agenda.

There is still work to be done before UNFF's 12th Session in 2017. From 25 to 27 April 2016, the first of two ad hoc expert group meetings is scheduled to be convened in New York to discuss the

content of the IAF's Strategic Plan for 2017 to 2030, as well as the quadrennial program of work for 2017 to 2020; moreover, regarding the UN Forest Instrument, experts will consider proposals to replace the references to the Millennium Development Goals with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The expert group report will be forwarded to the UNFF Working Group and Special Session, scheduled to gather in early 2017 in New York, which will deliberate on those issues. Finally, in mid-2017, the 12th Session of the UN Forum on Forests will take place.

Excellences,

UNFF11 also recognized the importance of our partners, including regional and subregional organizations and processes. Forests do not stop at a country's boundary, and SFM can only be successful if all stakeholders are part of the effort toward its promotion and implementation. In this regard, UNFF11 decided to restructure the Forum's sessions and enhance its intersessional work, including by fostering an exchange of experiences and lessons learned. From now on, the odd-year sessions of UNFF will serve as an opportunity for all stakeholders, including our regional and subregional partners, to provide technical advice and input to the Forum.

Moreover, Member States emphasized the importance of strengthening the collaboration between UNFF and relevant regional and subregional partners with a view to facilitate the implementation of the UN Forest Instrument, as well as to facilitate the inputs of those entities to sessions of the Forum. The UNFF Secretariat is to consult with relevant regional and subregional partners on means to enhance collaboration, and regional and subregional entities are invited to consider developing and strengthening programs on SFM, as well as to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to sessions of the Forum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I mentioned before that throughout this year and early 2017, there will be discussions which will lead to a decision on the Forum's Strategic Plan and next quadrennial program of work, as well as on the placement of SDG references in the UN Forest Instrument. All our regional and subregional stakeholders, including FAO and its Regional Forestry Commissions, were invited to provide input to those deliberations. Next year, when experts begin to discuss how to fulfill UNFF11's mandate on the matters at hand, they will do so having as a basis written material to be compiled by the Secretariat, taking into account all contributions received, including from regional and subregional entities. This shows the strengthened importance of our partners in the decision-making process of the Forum.

Dear colleagues,

Since UNFF's creation in 2000, FAO has been our closest partner, not only in the context of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests but also regarding regional cooperation. The deliberations of this and all FAO's regional forestry commissions provide UNFF with important input regarding what happens in the ground; so rest assured that your discussions in Campeche will influence UNFF's next steps.

I thank you for your attention.