

**International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) - Fiftieth Session**

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United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat, New York

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Greetings from New York!

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the floor.

It is my great pleasure to be present at this historic event today. I would like to express our heartfelt congratulations to ITTO on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ITTC, and congratulate Mr. Ze Meka for his dedication and exemplary leadership of the organization for the last several years.

The fiftieth session of ITTC is a milestone; it is an occasion to celebrate great achievements by ITTO and a golden opportunity to chart the path forward. ITTO has developed a remarkable reputation over the course of its history, and we are very proud of its role in providing a framework for cooperation and consultation between countries producing and consuming tropical timber, promoting sustainable utilization and conservation of tropical forests and their genetic resources, and for maintaining the ecological balance in the regions concerned.

We would also like to commend ITTO for the important role they play as part of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), as well their niche as the only legally binding instrument on tropical forests.

We very much look forward to continued cooperation with ITTO in our complementary roles of promoting sustainable forest management world-wide and a strong partnership in the context of a strengthened future international arrangement on forests.

Now allow me a few minutes to update you on the review of the international arrangement on forests (IAF) process.

As you may be aware, 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 is out and is now posted on our website.

The assessment 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 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 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 equipped 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. The Team has identified four options as the most feasible and practical options for the future of the IAF:

- (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 science policy interface, creation of a 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.

The IAF Independent Assessment report will be officially presented during the upcoming second meeting of the ad hoc expert group (AHEG2) on the IAF (12-16 January 2015, New York). AHEG2 will review this report, as well as other inputs, including the outcome of the Chinese Country-led Initiative, and the second compilation of views of stakeholders on the IAF. In this regard, we would like to remind delegates of the 5<sup>th</sup> December deadline to submit to the UNFFS their views and proposals on the IAF. Based on a review of all inputs, AHEG2 will put forth its recommendations on the future of the IAF to UNFF11. 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.

According to the decision of the UNFF11 Bureau, UNFF11 is expected to have two negotiated outcomes, namely, a resolution on the future of the IAF beyond 2015, and a ministerial declaration.

Distinguished delegates,

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 the differing national circumstances, as well as 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 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 from Ireland and Kenya were recently appointed by the President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly to conduct consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. The organization and modalities for the negotiations are expected to be announced in due course.

Distinguished delegates,

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 a 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 solidly pave the way for integration of forests in the post-2015 development agenda. To this end, we encourage all of you to actively participate in the upcoming meetings of AHEG2 and the UNFF11 session.

Distinguished delegates,

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to commend ITTO for their cooperation in seconding staff to the UNFFS in the past, and for helping us with human resources issues in times of crisis. As we prepare for the UNFF11 session, we now, more than ever before, are in critical need of both human and financial resources, and would like to call upon the Council to assist once again with secondment of staff to the UNFF Secretariat.

To ensure that the outcomes of UNFF11 fully reflect the views of all Member States, we would like to call upon the donor community to assist in providing funds for the participation of developing countries and countries in transition to the forthcoming AHEG, and more importantly, to the UNFF11 Session in May 2015.

In closing, we would like to once again express the UNFF Secretariat's sincere appreciation to ITTO for the opportunity to address you, and to especially thank Mr. Emmanuel Ze Meka for his strong support to the UNFFS during his tenure as the Director of ITTO.

Thank you for your attention.