

*Opening Session of the First Meeting of the Open Ended Intergovernmental
Ad Hoc Expert Group on the International Arrangement on Forests
24 February 2014 - Nairobi, Kenya*

*Ambassador Kamau,
Professor Judi Wangalwa Wakhungu,
Distinguished colleagues and experts,*

I am pleased to be here in Nairobi, to address this first meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group (AHEG) on the international arrangement on forests (IAF). The AHEG's conclusion on the effectiveness of the IAF and its recommendations on the future of the IAF, will provide a solid foundation for the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in 2015. UNFF11 will decide on the future of the multilateral policies and institutions on forests within and outside the UN system.

Allow me to share some of my initial assessment of the current IAF and also some suggestions about its future. Ambassador Kamau has already touched upon a number of key successes of the current Arrangement and its intergovernmental machinery, UNFF.

The extensive capacity-building work of the UNFF Facilitative Process in addressing the forest financing needs of special groups of countries, has been another noteworthy achievement. Many of these activities have relied on effective

collaboration among regional and international forest-related organizations, including, in particular, through the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

The outcomes of the Forum sessions have significantly impacted the work of the other forest-related bodies. UNFF decisions, outcomes and analytical products have been referred to in more than one hundred resolutions, decisions and official outcomes of the governing bodies of forest-related organizations and conventions.

Dear Colleagues,

So how do we build on these successes as we envision the future IAF? Any decision regarding a legally binding instrument on all types of forests and a global forest fund still remains with governments. Undoubtedly, the actions taken on these two important issues will be defining factors that will affect the future IAF. Nonetheless, lack of agreement on these issues should not prevent us from moving ahead in addressing gaps and shortcomings in the current IAF.

The future IAF should build on its successes, address the areas of weakness and devise a plan to effectively achieve the objectives of the IAF. Currently, the Forum and its outcomes are better known at the global level than at regional and national levels. Building upon the current work of the Forum, the future IAF should improve outreach and engagement with stakeholders at the regional and national levels. Implementation of sustainable forest management is a responsibility of all stakeholders, at all levels.

The UNFF11 decision on the future IAF should pave the way for mobilization of additional resources from all sources for sustainable management

of all types of forests, and increased awareness on the work of the Forum. In particular, more resources should be mobilized to advance implementation of the Forest Instrument and the achievement of the GOFs. The new phase of the IAF beyond 2015 should also include actions to strengthen the capacity of the UNFF national focal points. These measures will lead to greater national ownership and greater recognition of the value of forests, and will facilitate implementation of the Forum's decisions at the national and regional levels. In addition, in the new phase of the IAF, the budgetary and human resources of the UNFF Secretariat should also be strengthened in a sustainable manner.

Collaboration and coordination between UNFF and other forest-related bodies; in particular, the Rio Conventions, should be further strengthened. We seek your insights on how UNFF can further strengthen its relationship with other forest-related organizations and conventions. Members of the Forum at UNFF11 may also wish to devise concrete measures to:

- ensure provision of funding for the CPF joint activities as well as the CPF secretariat functioning;
- increase the sense of ownership and revitalize engagement of all CPF members in the work of the CPF; and
- ensure equitable burden and credit-sharing among its members, as well as a clear method of work.

These measures will strengthen the CPF and its support to the work of the Forum.

Reviewing the IAF and designing its future is closely connected to the broader discussions on sustainable development goals and the post-2015 UN development agenda. During the recent eighth session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, Member States' views diverged on what was the best course of action for integrating forests in the SDGs. Nonetheless, there was general convergence on the vital role of forests for sustainable development and the need for integration of forests in the SDGs.

There was also broad convergence on the value of the existing goals, objectives and targets on forests. As you know these have been developed and agreed upon through existing processes such as the Global Objectives on Forests and the Aichi Targets. The role and impact of the UNFF was also highlighted, and some countries emphasized the clear link between the work of the SDGs OWG on forests and the IAF review process within the context of UNFF.

There are many ways the AHEG and eventually UNFF11 can constructively help the SDG and post-2015 processes to integrate forests in their outcomes. Through successful AHEGs and UNFF11, members of the Forum can crystallize their vision for forest in the post-2015 development agenda. This would provide a conduit for the Forum to connect to the broader sustainable development agenda, and interact with the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Distinguished participants,

Your fruitful discussions here at the AHEG will enable the UNFF to further perform its catalytic role in advancing sustainable management of all types of forests, and in promoting a comprehensive approach to forests.

Our role in DESA and the UNFF Secretariat is to facilitate your deliberations on these issues, so that Member States can make an informed decision on the future of the IAF at UNFF11. This is our priority and our focus now.

You can count on the support of the entire Department for the future IAF. I also take this opportunity to reassure you of our Department's continued support to the UNFF in achieving its goals, and to a successful outcome for UNFF11 in May 2015.

Thank you.