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OPENING TENTH SESSION OF UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS, TURKISH PREMIER URGES 'GLOBAL CONSCIENCE' ON MANAGING VITAL RESOURCE

As Ministerial Segment Begins, Top UN Economic, Social Affairs Official Calls On Forum to Identify Policy Initiatives that Will Make Forests Sustainable for All

ISTANBUL, 8 April — As the United Nations Forum on Forests opened its two-week session in Istanbul this morning, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan implored the developed world to end unbridled, irresponsible growth and commit to sustainably manage the world's forests before it was too late.

“We must all see and understand that if the process we call growth and development continues in this way, will not have a liveable world,” Mr. Erdoğan said at the opening of the Forum's Ministerial Segment. “When all the trees are cut, all animals are hunted, all waters are polluted and the air becomes unbreathable you will understand that money is something that you cannot eat.”

The Forum, holding its first ever session outside United Nations Headquarters in New York, is the only international body that addresses all forest and tree policy issues. Over the next two weeks, it would hear from senior Government officials, the heads of international agencies and civil society representatives on a range of forestry-related concerns. The session would aim to spur global action to reduce deforestation; improve the livelihoods and economies of people who derived their livelihoods and sustenance from forests; increase the number of forests under protection; and increase aid to developing countries to improve forest management.

Mr. Erdoğan said that under the current development and growth paradigm, the prosperity of one region depended on the abject misery of another. The world's principles were being tested, and all people must understand the tragedies that often followed in the wake of global expansion and economic growth. “If the dress we are wearing is made by a 5-year-old in Bangladesh, if the chocolate we give to our children has added poison to rivers in Africa, if the coat we are wearing has led to the extinction of a species, then we must feel the need to change. We must deeply question this and come up with solutions,” he declared.

The privileged few could no longer afford to remain indifferent to that unfair imbalance, he said, calling for a “global conscience” and a comprehensive road map to address the needs of the poor, conserve the Earth's water supply and protect forest ecosystems until 2015 and beyond. Turkey was doing its part, he said, citing a 2008-2012 action plan for forestation and land erosion control, the recent planting of 2 billion trees, and steps to increase the nation's forest cover to 30 per cent of its national territory by 2023. In addition, Turkey was advising neighbouring countries on how to stem soil erosion and pollution.

Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said that Turkey's hosting of

the Forum's tenth session reaffirmed the country's commitment to sustainable forest management and other global development issues. Echoing Mr. Erdoğan's concerns, he said services provided by forests were still being taken for granted, and their value had not been fully captured by the market. Forests continued to be overexploited; woodlands and forest areas were being converted to agricultural land and put to other uses without adequate control measures in place.

The Forum provided a vital venue for coordinating concerted local, national and international efforts to address those issues, he said, recalling that the non-binding forest instrument and its four global objectives had emerged from the Forum's deliberations. Over the next two weeks, the Forum would devise important policy initiatives aimed at making forests a sustainable resource for all, and an important tool in resolving broader economic, social and environmental challenges.

Jan McAlpine, Director of the Forum Secretariat, also shared the Prime Minister's worries about the lack of global understanding of the full link between forests and society, the world and the economy as a whole. She called for sustainable forestry management to be addressed comprehensively, as she introduced the Secretary-General's reports on that subject, which she said were based on input from more than 190 Member States, as well as national, regional and international organizations.

Mario Ruales Carranza (Ecuador), Forum Chair, said the Forum was a "unique opportunity" to finally agree on action to sustain financing for forestry management, drawing on the intensive, focused discussions of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on forest financing. The discussions over the next two weeks on emerging issues would connect the Forum's work to such important intergovernmental policy processes as the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) outcome and the ongoing deliberations on a post-2015 development agenda. The Forum must make important decisions that would impact the global policy debate on all forest-related issues.

While the global community recognized the social and environmental functions of forests — home to 80 per cent of the world's land biodiversity and the backbone of the economic livelihood of 1.6 billion people — they were less aware of their true monetary value. That must change, he said, noting that timber exports alone were valued at \$246 billion in 2011.

At the outset of the meeting, the Forum elected by acclamation Mario Ruales Carranza (Ecuador) to serve as Chair of the session and Saiful Azam Martinus Abdullah (Malaysia) to serve as its Rapporteur. Veysel Eroğlu, Turkey's Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs, was elected as Co-Chair of the Ministerial Segment.

Participants also were shown a short film on Turkish forestry, prepared by the host country.

Opening statements were also made by Mr. Eroğlu, Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey and Co-Chair of the Forum's Ministerial Segment; Néstor Osorio (Colombia), President of the Economic and Social Council; and Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Assistant Director-General of the Forestry Department, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

Also speaking today were the Prime Minister of Madagascar, as well as ministers and other senior officials from Fiji (on behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China), Benin (on behalf of the least developed countries and in his national capacity), Congo (on behalf of the African Group), Finland, Guinea, Lebanon, Dominican Republic, Uganda, Swaziland, Gabon, Albania, Mauritius, Burundi, Indonesia, Zambia, Dominica, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Belarus, Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, United States, China, Iran and Brazil.

An observer for the State of the Palestine spoke, as did a representative of a European Union.

The CEO of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) also delivered a statement.

The Forum's tenth session will continued at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 9 April, with parallel round-table discussions on "forests and economic development", and on the "international arrangement of forests, the Rio+20 outcome and the Post-2015 development agenda".

Background

The United Nations Forum on Forests began the High-Level Ministerial Segment of its two-week tenth biennial session this morning. For background information, see Press Release [ENV/DEV/1344](#) of 4 April 2013.

Opening Remarks

MARIO RUALES CARRANZA (Ecuador), Forum Chair, opened the meeting, saying it was the first time the body was held outside United Nations Headquarters and with a specific focus on forests and economic development. The global community had largely recognized the social and environmental functions of forests, which were home to 80 per cent of the world's land biodiversity and the backbone of the economic livelihood of 1.6 billion people. Less recognized, but equally important, was the fact that timber exports were valued at \$246 billion in 2011 alone. That was just a small percentage of the true monetary and non-monetary value of forests to the global economy.

The Forum had committed to make a meaningful decision on forest financing during the session, he continued. The gathering was a "unique opportunity" to finally agree on action towards that end, based on four years of intensive, focused work by the Forum during the second meeting of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on forest financing, held in January in Vienna. The Group's Co-Chairs would present the Group's report later in the week. Other important items for discussion included progress in implementing the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; achievement of the Global Objectives of Forests; regional and subregional inputs, enhanced cooperation and coordination related to the work of the Collaborate Partnership on Forests; the multi-stakeholder dialogue; and emerging issues, he said.

The discussions on emerging issues would connect the Forum's work to important intergovernmental policy processes, including the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) outcome and the ongoing deliberations on a post-2015 development agenda, both of which had major impacts on forests and the Forum's work in the lead-up to its eleventh session in 2015. He said that important decisions must be made during the current session of the Forum, which had a positive impact in shaping the global policy debate on all forest-related issues. That fact had been recognized by Heads of State last June in Rio and reflected in the Rio+20 Conference's outcome document, "The Future We Want". In closing, he called on all to participate actively and constructively in the discussions over the next two weeks.

VEYSEL EROĞLU, Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs of [Turkey](#) and Co-Chair of the Forum's Ministerial Segment, stressed the importance of the high-level decisions to be made during the current session, taking into account the deliberations that had been conducted at regional levels in the run-up to the event. Recalling that the tenth session of the Forum was its first meeting held outside United Nations Headquarters in New York, he expressed expectations that the outcome would contribute to the Organization's broader work to alleviate poverty and identify solutions to other ills facing the international community.

The most important goal for delegations gathered in Istanbul was to ensure the protection and responsible development of the world's forests. Indeed, forests could play a crucial role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, he continued, also highlighting the relation between the world's woodland areas and development within the framework of the sustainable development agenda. Deforestation was not a national problem, but an international one, posing a threat to the entire world. As for his country, he said that 27 per cent of Turkey was forest covered, and the Government's goal was to increase that to 30 per cent, among other ways, by fighting forest erosion, planting trees and enacting necessary legislation, as well as developing and protecting forest ecosystems and biodiversity. Lastly, he reiterated that the

results of the Forum's session would have global ramifications.

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN, Prime Minister of Turkey, said he hoped the session would make a significant contribution to humanity. The work to be done and the messages to be sent to the international community by the Forum would be significant in terms of building a more liveable world for all. Istanbul, as host city, had significant meaning as the bridge between East and West. With its multidimensional character and role in the Alliance of Civilizations, Istanbul continued to spread messages of peace and tolerance, he said, also noting that the city was a candidate to host the 2020 Olympic Games. In addition, recent Government reforms were transforming it into a global financial centre. Istanbul also had the potential to serve as a centre for the United Nations; that would be good for world peace, the Alliance of Civilizations, tolerance and fair global development.

The world population had reached 7 billion and there had been rapid growth in industrial zones, causing the seas to be polluted, rivers and lakes to dry out, ecosystems to deteriorate and forests to be at risk of vanishing, he said. Differences between peoples, countries and regions were growing. During a visit last year to Somalia, he had drawn the world's attention to the tragic plight of that country's people, hundreds of thousands of whom lived in small, cramped spaces, with little food and water. By contrast, natural resources were abundant in the northern hemisphere, where people owned large, gas-guzzling vehicles. He called for a "global conscience" and a global plan that focused more on addressing the plight and needs of the poor. The current global strategy for development and growth was such that the prosperity of one region depended on the abject misery of another.

"Today we don't have the luxury to say we don't care about others," he said, emphasizing that rather than showing indifference, people in developed countries in particular should question how pasta arrived on the supermarket shelf, gold in the jewellery store and gas at the petrol station. People must understand the tragedies that often followed in the wake of global expansion and economic growth. What distinguished people from animals and plants was the fact that human beings had a conscience, he said. "If the dress we are wearing is made by a 5-year-old in Bangladesh, if the chocolate we give to our children has added poison to rivers in Africa, if the coat we are wearing has led to the extinction of a species, then we must feel the need to change. We must deeply question this and come up with solutions," he declared.

"We must all see and understand that if the process we call growth and development continues in this way, we will not have a liveable world," he warned. "When all the trees are cut, all animals are hunted, all waters are polluted and the air becomes unbreathable, you will understand that money is something that you cannot eat," he said. The international community must take steps to prevent that occurrence; plans must include ways to protect water resources and forest ecosystems, a necessity that was made clear at Rio+20. During the current session, the Forum would focus on sustainable forestry management as part of the global development agenda through 2015 and beyond. Turkey would follow up on implementation of those goals very closely.

During the last decade, some 5.2 million hectares of forests had disappeared annually, he said. But Turkey had carried out reforestation in order to increase the size of its forests. Today, the country had 22 million hectares of forests; it aimed to increase the share of forests to 30 per cent of its national territory by 2023. Towards that end, it had put in motion a 2008-2012 action plan for forestation and controlling erosion. Turkey had already achieved its current goals and had planted 2 billion trees in an area approximately the size of Belgium. Sixty per cent of his country's forests were at high risk of fires. Despite that, Turkey was one of the most successful countries in Europe in fighting fires. Firefighters in the country now responded to fires within eight minutes on average. Turkey also was helping neighbouring countries with sustainable forestry management. It continued to share experiences with least developed countries on fighting erosion.

In closing, he said the Forum's current session would be an important platform for creating a new understanding on how the international community should proceed to protect the world's forests. Istanbul had been home to many civilizations throughout history. He hoped it would be the place that would join all countries with respect to global issues. In terms of protecting forests, everyone shared the same feeling and

spirit, he said.

NÉSTOR OSORIO (Colombia), President of the Economic and Social Council, said that the 54-member body worked through an impressive system of interlocking subsidiary bodies, such as the Forum on Forest — the only existing institution in the multilateral field aiming to integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives into consensual intergovernmental policymaking. The institutional relations between the Council and its subsidiary bodies were intended to be complementary and mutually supportive. The Forum was the only Council subsidiary body with universal membership. It was also the only body within the Organization holding regular debate on the most critical issues related to forests, and providing policy advice and recommendations to the United Nations' system, Governments and other stakeholders.

A significant contribution of the Forum had been the agreement on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and its four global objectives on forests, unanimously endorsed by the Council and adopted by the General Assembly. "Because of its uniqueness, the Forum is well positioned to support the Council in bringing together the three dimensions of sustainable development while addressing the intersection of these dimensions with forests, under the framework of an inclusive and participative focus," he said. The Rio+20 outcome document had laid out a strong vision for the achievement of a sustainable future, where the management of forests and other natural resources feature prominently. The document provided the Council with an opportunity to play the lead in that area and to contribute significantly to the definition of a post-2015 development agenda.

The Forum, in particular, had a central role to play in the way the Council responded to the sustainable development challenge by bringing together the economic, social and environmental aspects of one of the most critical natural resources: forests. He said he was pleased the links between the Rio+20 outcome, the post-2015 global development agenda, and the future of forests would be considered during the current session. The outcome of such deliberations would certainly enrich the Council's contribution to the special event on the status of the Millennium Development Goals, to be held during the upcoming sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. It was also crucial to ensure that the outcomes of the Forum's deliberations inform other subsidiary bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission for Social Development, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples and other bodies in a more deliberate and systematic way. Similarly, the Forum could also draw on the deliberations of those bodies as input for its work, he added.

WU HONGBO, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, said he was privileged to "share this historic moment in this beautiful city, Istanbul." Recalling that two years ago, the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries had been held in the city, he said Turkey's hosting the tenth session of the Forum reaffirmed the country's commitment to sustainable forest management and other international development issues.

Stressing the important role forests played, including in climate change mitigation, protection of biodiversity, watershed conservation, protection against landslides, and preservation of livelihoods for forest-dependent people, he said that the challenge was to maintain nature's gifts, manage them in a sustainable way and incorporate them within the broader effort to achieve sustainable development for all. Services provided by forests were still being taken for granted, and their value had not been fully captured by the market, with forests continuing to be overexploited.

Moreover, he continued, woodlands and forest areas were being converted to agricultural land and put to other uses without ensuring that adequate control measures were in place. To address those issues, the Forum provided a vital venue for coordinating concerted efforts at local, national and international levels, he said, recalling that the non-binding forest instrument and its four global objectives had emerged from the Forum's deliberations. "Our collective aim to halt deforestation and forest degradation and enhance sustainable forest management will increase economic, social and environmental benefits for all of society," he said.

Highlighting the economic, social and environmental benefits provided by forests, he said the

present session of the Forum would deliver important policy initiatives over the next two weeks, aiming to make forests a sustainable resource for all, and an important tool in resolving broader economic, social and environmental challenges. The session would also explore the way forward in financing for sustainable forest management and make critical contributions to defining the post-2015 development agenda, among other efforts. The first two days of the Conference would be devoted to ministerial debate. The gathering of political leaders would provide a "much-needed" impetus, commitment and vision to sustainable forest management. Noting today's wet weather, he recalled that it was said in his home country, China, that timely rain helped abundant harvests later in the year. Today's rain signalled a "good harvest" in Turkey and symbolized the success of the Forum's tenth annual session.

JAN MCALPINE, Director, Secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests, said that the body had a unique role. During more than 20 years of discussions in the United Nations, the global community had struggled to define which aspects of sustainable forest management to focus on. At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — known as the "Earth Summit" — delegates decided to create the forest principles; and last year, at Rio+20, they agreed those principles were still pertinent today and should not be redefined. Much work had been done over the years among Governments, civil society and the private sector to better understand the relationship between forests and socio-economic development, and how forest principles should be implemented.

Previewing several of the reports before the Forum, she said the information presented therein had been based on input from more than 190 Member States, incorporating analysis and input from national, regional and international organizations. She stressed the need for the Forum to accomplish the objectives of the forest principles and the forest instrument. The relevant reports of the Secretary-General examined the full scope of the economic value of forests, financing issues, and gaps and challenges in that regard. The reports also gave suggestions on how Governments might address those challenges and how to provide practical financing.

She fully endorsed the Prime Minister Erdoğan's statement and said that today, it was vital for the global community to take stock of actions already being implemented, what must be done moving forward, and remaining gaps. She echoed the Prime Minister's concern of the lack of global understanding of the full scope of the links between forests and society, the world and the economy as a whole. The international community did not have the data to truly make an argument for how to eradicate food insecurity or poverty. World peace was not possible either without looking at the relationship of forests and trees to agriculture, water, energy, climate and health, among other areas. Forests were one of the most complex systems to understand and grasp. There was a tendency to take a narrow approach on such matters, but to achieve sustainable forest management, they must be addressed comprehensively. The Forum Bureau had worked hard to establish a work programme that would give the session an opportunity to consider priority issues for now, and for the eleventh session in 2015.

EDUARDO ROJAS-BRIALES, Assistant Director-General of the Forestry Department, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, said the session came at an opportune moment, given the outcomes of the Rio+20 conference and the Forum's recommendations on forest financing and economic development, as well as other events related to the Millennium Development Goals and expected climate change agreement in 2015. More specifically, the session would set the path for review of the international arrangement on forests, of which the Partnership was a key part.

The decisions and broad mandates of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests' member organizations helped to ensure an integrated approach on forests that addressed trade-offs and synergies across the key sectors operating at the landscape level. For the Partnership, that meant developing initiatives to meet the priorities of member states and supporting the work of the Forum. It also meant thinking more strategically on how to deal with forest issues through an integrated approach to sustainable forest management. The term "sustainability" had been coined by Hans Carl von Carlowitz in 1713, 300 years ago. It had since become aphorism, influencing nearly every aspect of life.

Research showed that the contributions of forests and forestry to green growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development were recognized more than ever. However, challenges to halt deforestation and forest degrading remained. The agenda of the Forum was well designed to address the cross-sectoral nature and functions of forests. In that regard, the Partnership's role in providing relevant solutions should continue to be emphasized. He said that the Partnership had delivered a number of outputs, including the 2012 Advisory Group on Finance study on Forest Financing and a scientific assessment on the relationship between biodiversity, carbon, forests and people, which underlined the usefulness of an integrated landscape approach. Members of the Partnership also contributed to the adoption in 2011 by the General Assembly of the International Day of Forests, now commemorated on 21 March every year.

Introduction of Reports

Ms. MCALPINE, taking the floor a second time, then introduced the following reports by the Secretary-General: assessment of progress made on the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and towards the achievement of the four global objectives on forests (documents [E/CN.18/2013/2](#) and [E/CN.18/2013/2/Add.1](#)); Forests and economic development (document [E/CN.18/2013/4](#)); Conclusions and recommendations for addressing key challenges of forests and economic development (document [E/CN.18/2013/5](#)); International arrangement on forests, the post-2015 United Nations development agenda and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development: interconnections and implications (document [E/CN.18/2013/6](#)); Means of implementation for sustainable forest management (document [E/CN.18/2013/11](#)); and the Report of the second meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Management (document [E/CN.18/2013/12](#)).

She said the Secretariat had adopted a different reporting format. Much data had been compiled from forestry agencies and other sources. The reports looked at how the forest principles were being implemented. The number of voluntary reports from countries to the Forum had tripled thanks to the improved reporting format with 58 countries submitting reports, accounting for 52 per cent of the global forest area. Many countries were adopting innovative approaches to incorporate into national laws and practices the elements agreed in the forest instrument and ways to monitor their success, she said, citing several trends in that regard.

Wrapping up the opening segment, NAOKO ISHII, CEO and Chair, Head of Delegation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), said that for too long, natural resources had been used without any real consideration for their true worth to society. Countries continued to suffer from widespread forest degradation. Given that forests were central to the economic agenda of developing countries, the value of their capital must be incorporated into the way decisions were made and progress was measured. The GEF did not work in isolation, but played a role in the wider sustainable development framework. Development could only be addressed through integral action.

She said that the opportunity for more sustainable use of forest resources was not open-ended, and delays in decision-making would cause more deforestation and limit development choices. A consensus was needed. GEF was uniquely positioned to capture the objectives of all three sustainable development conventions and advance the sustainable management of forests. Forests must be reorganized in national sustainable development agendas. She called for better relations between forests and other land-use policies such as agriculture. Continuing, she said the GEF had strong support from within its core donors. It had responded to calls from the eighth session of the Forum and was providing up to \$1 billion for sustainable forest management and implementation of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative, which includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, through 2014.

That incentive mechanism already had achieved considerable success, with €451 million programmed in GEF grants and \$600 million in co-finance in 55 countries since 2010. It would use the experience gained during this pilot to strengthen approaches and respond to calls from the Organization-led Initiative and the Ad Hoc Expert Group to simplify the process. The GEF had proposed to donors to reduce forest loss by addressing the drivers of deforestation, maintaining forest ecosystem services, including

through improved management services, reversing the loss of ecosystem services by restoring forest landscapes, and acknowledging the importance of South-South cooperation. Those investments would encourage increased private sector engagement, develop new technologies for forest monitoring, support sustainable financing mechanisms for sustainable forest management and encourage development of sustainable livelihood.

Statements

INIA BATIKOTO SERUIRATU, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests and Provincial Development of Fiji, speaking on behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries and China, said that the Group had supported the outcome document of the Rio+20 summit, entitled "The Future We Want". That "seminal" text highlighted the vital role of the United Nations Forum on Forests in addressing forest-related issues in a holistic manner and promoting international policy coordination to achieve sustainable forest management. It also underscored the contribution of sustainable forest management to sustainable development across all its pillars, including respect for the rights of indigenous people and rural communities that lived and survived on the forest. It also invited the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to continue its support to the Forum and encouraged other stakeholders to remain engaged in the work of that body as well.

He reminded participants that the global financial and economic crisis had created further impediments to addressing the financial needs of countries to sustainably manage their forests. Therefore, the Group underscored the importance of addressing financial gaps in sustainable forest management. In that regard, the Group urged developed country donors to significantly increase and at least double the funding to all types of forests. While emphasizing the need to strengthen forest financing by United Nations agencies and international organizations, he said that the Group invited multilateral organizations that had not yet done so to consider forest financing in their programmes.

BLAISE AHANHANZO-GLÈLÈ, Minister of Environment, Housing and Urban Development of Benin, speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, highlighted the importance of raising awareness about the urgent need for sustainable forest management, as forests covered about 37 per cent of the planet. Forests also mitigated the effects of climate change, improved the quality of water and provided food, heat and jobs for communities. Despite those benefits, large tracts of forest disappeared each year, leading to desertification, water scarcity and other problems.

Cautioning against soil degradation, declining fish stocks and water scarcity, he said that dealing with those problems made it difficult for local Governments to carry out other development priorities. In that regard, sustainable forest management was a prerequisite for addressing such issues. The reports of the Secretary-General presented to the session highlighted the need for investments in forests, including technology, waste management, water supplies and providing a path to a green economy with lower carbon emissions. Among measures least developed countries were taking, he noted the development of national programmes based on the Nairobi Plan of Action to Promote Land-Based Investments That Benefit Africa, among other agreements.

HENRI DJOMBO, Minister for Economy, Forestry and Sustainable Development of the Congo, speaking on behalf of African Group, said that African societies depended on forests for timber and non-timber products. Forests provided invaluable global ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and clean water and they were very important for energy and food security. In Africa, peoples' livelihoods were intrinsically linked to forests, given that most States were agrarian economies. Noting the outcomes of the ad hoc expert groups and the absence of concrete data, he also noted with concern the limited voluntary reporting on implementation of the non-legally binding instrument, as well as the lack of serious progress in creating a Global Forest Fund. The current session should provide guidance and enhance the efficacy of the forest instrument for the post-2015 period. A practical solution was needed for sustainable forestry management worldwide. He recommended creation of the ad hoc expert group to review performance of current global arrangements on forests, including the means for its implementation, and various means for future arrangements, with a view to submitting proposals during the Forum's eleventh session.

He encouraged the mainstreaming of forest issues into national development plans and decision-making processes and providing more support to States so they could better implement the non-legally binding instrument. In terms of regional and subregional contributions, REDD+ issues should focus on forestation, reforestation, rewarding forest conservation through payment for carbon sequestration and sustainable forestry management. He called for creating a forest fund for Africa and mechanisms for its operationalization. Each country and region must take responsibility for sustainable forestry management. Forests were significant for national development and poverty eradication. He called for continued support to countries engaged in sustainable forestry management, carbon capture, and in providing energy, water and food. Sustainable forestry management must be included in the international development agenda and in context of national development plans, he said, adding finally that the global forest fund supported and made easily accessible.

BELA SZOMBATI, Delegation of the European Union, said forests and sustainable forestry management could significantly contribute to the transition to a green economy. Forest products and forest ecosystem services provided informal, non-cash benefits that were central in the livelihood of rural people. For Governments to better manage forestry challenges, it was necessary to have better forest governance, including by adopting integrated landscape and land-use approaches, and by better reflecting more on the multiple benefits of forests and wide-stakeholder participation. The forest instrument was crucial for helping Governments coordinate national and global efforts. During the Forum's 2015 review of the effectiveness of international arrangements on forests, the European Union expected agreement on other global processes with far-reaching implications on forests such as the Rio+20 follow-up, the post-2015 development agenda and others.

He went on to call for a clear road map that would ensure that the next session of the Forum could make an informed decision in line with its mandate. The review process and its timetable should be fully consistent with other major global processes. On forest financing, he stressed the successful work of the Facilitative Process and called for it to continue during the next intersessional period. Financing for sustainable forestry management should come from diverse sources. The outcome of the ad hoc expert group did not give sufficient, conclusive evidence that creation of new forest-specific financing mechanisms could help address the multiple financing challenges. He looked forward to discussions on means of implementation aimed at creating a meaningful, balanced decision for all parties.

JEAN OMER BERIZIKY, Prime Minister and Minister of Environment and Forests of the Republic of Madagascar, said that he was convinced that the current session of the Forum would yield solid results, including regarding the links between forest and development, which was of great interest to his country. Noting that he shared concerns voiced by other speakers, he said his island nation was well known for its rich biodiversity, with 80 per cent of its species endemic to the island. But many of them were under threat, and, as called for in Agenda 21 — an outcome of the 1992 Earth Summit — the Government had identified sustainable economic growth as a goal and had created forest policy in 1996. International support had helped the country make some headway in managing and protecting its forests, but only 10 per cent of the territory was covered forest. He stressed the need for an international conservation instrument and the need for a global fund, which would help achieve social justice without compromising development.

JARI KOSKINEN, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, said forests provided shelter, fuel and food for people in his country. In the nineteenth century, the Finnish forest sector faced its first large-scale turnaround. Tar production had ended because wooden ships had given way to iron boats. That was the end of forest livelihoods for some people. But it had been actually the beginning of the new kind of Finnish forest sector based largely on sawmilling industry. He was confident that in the future, new production patterns would emerge. The future belonged to forest products and services coming from sustainably managed forests. Wood might turn out to be the key when the current oil- and carbon-based economy was replaced by new models and products, he added.

IBRAHIMA BOIRO, Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests, Guinea, said forests were vital for developing countries and were a source of economic, social and environmental well-being. Sustainable

forestry management was a major priority objective for Guinea. Her country had made strides in environmental protection and biodiversity protection. Among other measures, it had adopted a national forest policy, drafted a forest code, and adopted an action plan to combat deforestation. The Government had been strengthening its environmental components, including through the setting up of a thematic working group on forests, biodiversity, climate change and forest governance.

The major challenge was the lack of funding. There must be a systematic inventory and strengthening of communities and local stakeholders involved in forestry management. The Government's Environmental Department had conducted an in-depth study on forests' contributions to the national economy. She called for strengthening the REDD+ mechanisms, the GEF and the World Bank's Green Fund, as well as for support for technology transfer and capacity-building to developing countries so they could launch carbon credit facilities. She called for creation of a forestry group.

HUSSEIN AL HAJJ HASSAN, Minister of Agriculture, Lebanon, said that his country was one of few Eastern Mediterranean nations working on a host of reforestation projects. He cited the "40 million trees" initiative, which involved replanting trees over 10,000 square kilometres. Well known for its cedar trees, Lebanon was trying to recapture its image as "Green Lebanon". The private sector was involved in that regard. Yet he stressed that much expertise was needed to ensure that the wealth of initiatives and programmes was properly and comprehensively implemented. Despite its small size, Lebanon faced difficulties in reforestation. He called on countries with expertise in reforestation in arid and semi-arid areas to communicate with Lebanon and help it succeed in that task.

BAUTISTA ROJAS GÓMEZ, Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Dominican Republic, described how significantly forest extraction had decreased forest cover in his country during the 1950s and 60s. To reverse that situation, the Government had adopted various measures since the 1970s to recover the country's woodland areas, among them, banning logging and closing sawmills. As a result of those actions, forest cover, he said, had increased to 32 per cent. As for the border area with Haiti, which ran through several rivers, pressure on forests had increased despite the achievements of both nations. People living in those areas were poor and cut down trees for their livelihood. To address the issue, there was the need to alleviate their poverty by extending technical and financial support to those communities.

EPHRAIM KAMUNTU, Minister of Water and Environment of Uganda, recognized the value of the session for humanity and its theme. Forest catchments provided necessary services, such as water for agriculture, water for health, and water for industry. "Forest is not a choice, but the imperative," he said. The Ugandan Government had launched a tree-planting campaign in which every commemorative occasion, such as national holidays, graduations and marriages were used to promote tree plantings. Also, the Government had established a tree fund and processes to get it up and running were under way. There were several challenges his country faced, such as rapid population growth, which increased demand for forest products, as well as poverty. As such, he called for international support to help Uganda address such issues and to overcome difficulties posed by lack of adequate funding and the inability to gather adequate data on matters related to forests.

MDUDUZI DUNCAN DLAMINI, Minister of Tourism and Environmental Affairs of Swaziland, said that in his country, agriculture and community forestry provided livelihoods and income for 70 per cent of the population through extraction of fuel wood for domestic energy, medicinal plants, woodcrafts, edible plants and fruits, honey and other natural products. In recent years, the forestry industry had been faced with the problems of wild fires leading to closure of a pulp mill and sawmill and loss of jobs. The industry had also been hit by an infestation of invasive alien plant species, as well pests and diseases.

On the other hand, he said, community forests and woodlands, including rangelands and natural ecosystems, were heavily deforested and degraded due mainly to population growth and pressures on land for commercial agriculture, conversions of forestland to other land uses, growing poverty and other factors such as proliferation of invasive plant species which had infested about 80 per cent of the national land area at different levels of intensity. In partnership with stakeholders and development agencies, especially the private sector, the Government had provided financial resources and undertaken initiatives such as out-grower schemes,

commercialization of indigenous natural products, control and management of invasive alien plant species, beekeeping, tourism and ecotourism development.

GABRIEL TCHANGO, Minister of Water and Forests, Gabon, said that forests of the Congo basin were the world's second tropical environmental carbon sink. The Congo Basin Forest Partnership was set up in 2002. Gabon, given its vast forest cover, had been working for decades to sustainably manage its woodland areas. The country's President's had adopted the "Green Gabon" policy focused on forestry management, protection of biodiversity and on involving local populations in both those efforts. It also focused on local wood processing rather than exports for wealth and job creation. Given the importance of forests and trees in Africa, he hoped a consensus would be reached during the session to implement sustainable forestry management, set up a global forest fund, a "one-stop shop" on forestry issues, and a legally binding instrument. Such a consensus could only be achieved by sharing the common vision of "The Future We Want".

WALID ASSAF, Minister of Agriculture of the State of Palestine, said his Ministry focused on conserving forests and natural resources and expanding forestation projects. It had prepared a 2011-2013 agricultural strategy, a national strategy to combat desertification, and a national strategy for climate change. All of the Ministry's activities to expand and preserve the plant cover were financed by the Palestinian Authority despite its financial hardship. The Ministry's five-year work plan included the cultivation of 5 million forestry and pastoral seeds, as well as the distribution of 10 million fruit-bearing seeds, especially olive seeds, to farmers. Palestinian farmers grappled with arbitrary measures by the Israeli occupation such as destruction of forests to make way for settlement expansion, the "apartheid" separation wall, and the closures of forests for military drills. Specifically such closures were associated with the potential risk of forest fire outbreaks. It also faced lack of funding for forestation. He looked forward to joint ventures regionally and globally to provide the needed funding, knowledge and skills to achieve the four global objectives for sustainable forest management.

FATMIR MEDIU, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration of Albania, highlighted the importance of coordinating forest management at all levels. Albania faced many challenges in the area, and in order to address them, it had embarked on various measures, including legal framework reform, including law enforcement, as well as enhancing goods and services, including the payment for an ecosystem services scheme. The Government was seeking to better manage forest fires, as wooded areas played a crucial role in rural development. He thanked the World Bank, as well as Swedish and Turkish organizations for their support in forest management, noting that Albania was also implementing the European Union schemes for timber regulation and certification.

SATYA VEYASH FAUGOO, Minister of Agro-industry and Food Security of Mauritius, said his country was a developing economy and there was growing pressure on its limited land resources. Yet, over the past decade, Mauritius had been able to maintain forest cover of some 25 per cent of the land area. The population was keenly aware of forest-related issues due to several sensitization campaigns on, among other related issues, the vital functions performed by forests, particularly regarding soil and water conservation. The environmental functions of forests far outweighed their direct economic functions. The role of forests in reducing soil erosion, trapping carbon, conserving biodiversity and genetic resources, and promoting ecotourism were recognized and valued. The Government had initiated several relevant measures, including implementation of a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2006 to 2015.

JEAN CLAUDE NDUWAYO, Minister of Water, Environment, Land and Urban Planning, Burundi, said forests and trees were the country's economic, social and environmental heritage. His Government had increased its national budget for forestry management from \$60,000 in 2008 to \$4 million in 2010. A national forest policy incorporating the non-legally binding instrument was drawn up and reviewed. To implement that instrument, Burundi must strengthen an integrated approach, in synergy with all partners and relevant sectors. He encouraged countries to produce reports on non-legally binding instruments. There should be compensation for forests and non-agro-forestry management. He called for the creation of an African forest fund. Further, he urged the international community to support sustainable forestry management to enable Governments to provide friendly, local services. He supported creation of a global forest fund with easy access for developing countries.

H. ZULKIFLI HASAN, Minister of Forestry, Indonesia, said the framework of the post-2015 development agenda was being formed by the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons, which had convened most recently in Bali under the theme "Global Partnership and Means of Implementation". That panel should contribute to identifying better resolutions for global forest challenges. Now was the time to promote "sustainable growth with equity", he said, adding that, amid the growing worry over "ecological footprints", Indonesia was among the countries that had an "ecological surplus".

It had accomplished that by putting a moratorium on new licenses for using primary forests and peat lands, and by launching a "One Billion Indonesian Trees for the World" movement. To combat illegal logging, Indonesia had promoted global cooperation, especially regarding forest products in consumer countries, and had set up the Indonesia Timber Legality Assurance System to reduce illegal logging. He said that his country had created several financing instruments such as a revolving fund for small-scale forestry enterprises. Such steps had helped reduce deforestation, as indicated in the FAO's latest Forest Resources Assessment report.

WYLBUR SIMUUSA, Minister of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Zambia, said his country was working towards the four shared global objectives of forest management and was promoting participatory management of its wooded areas in order to attain sustainable forest stewardship. This would enhance all inclusive participatory principles, both as a tool for environmental preservation, as well as a social benefit for the people of the present and the future. Zambia, with a population of 13.6 million and with an annual growth rate of 2.8 per cent, had a 60 per cent forest and tree cover. Among the measures taken by the Government in the area were a review of the country's forestry policy and the adoption of a Forest Act, which would help it respond to different challenges and emerging issues, as well as increased financial support to the forestry sector.

MATTHEW JOSEPH WALTER, Minister for Agriculture and Forestry of Dominica, said that the country of just less than 300 square miles, could boast of having the highest percentage of forest cover in the Caribbean region, with about 66 per cent of its total land area under forests. The Government had over the years developed far-reaching legislation, such as the Forestry and Wildlife Act and the National Parks and Protected Area Act, which had ensured the maintenance of two protected Forest Reserves and three National Parks, one of those, the Morne Trois Pitons National Park had been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The necessity of conserving forests and nature had never been in question, since those assets constituted the basis of the country's economic existence. It was no accident that Dominica, an eco-tourism destination, had been designated as the "Nature Island of the Caribbean".

SUSIL PREMAJAYANTH, Minister for Environment and Renewable Energy, Sri Lanka, said his country had applied the concept of sustainable development 2,000 years ago. It was committed to the meeting the four global objectives of forest agreed during the Forum's sixth session in 2006. It had reversed the loss of forest cover by reducing the deforestation rate from 0.5 per cent to 0.25 per cent over the last 20 years. It had maintained 29 per cent of the country's land area under natural forest cover, thanks to effective enforcement of a logging ban on all natural forests since 1990. Sri Lanka had two world natural heritage sites despite its small size and it had committed to protect the remaining forest area for the benefit of all. Sustainable development was a practical reality, and presented an opportunity to balance the interests of man and nature with that of the environment and development.

GINMARDO KROMOSOETO, Minister of Physical Planning, Land Management and Forestry, Suriname, said his country was part of the rich Amazon rainforest region and had one of the largest stretches of pristine tropical rainforest in the world. It was one of only 11 countries characterized as a "high forest, low deforestation" country. Thanks to sustainable forestry management since the early 1950s, 13 per cent of the country's land was classified as a protected area. The Central Suriname Nature Reserve, some 1.6 million hectares of land, had been designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site. Suriname continued to optimally use its forest for sustainable timber harvesting, whose production had increased to 400,000 cubic metres in the past three years, while its potential was 1.4 million cubic metres per year. Suriname was actively involved in creating the REDD+ initiative. Last

month, its REDD+ Readiness Proposal had been accepted in the Fourteenth Participants Committee Meeting of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facilities of the World Bank.

Taking the floor in his national capacity, Mr. AHANHANZO-GLÈLÈ (Benin) said that the degradation of forest cover was the source of many environmental problems in his country, and the Government had launched in 1993 a national forest policy with a corresponding action plan. He said that funding was an absolutely necessary condition for the implementation of sustainable forest management. He called for national, regional and international efforts to ensure predictable financing for forest protection. He said that Benin would launch in May, with the support of UNDP, a programme aimed at planting 9 million trees at a total cost of 22 billion CFA francs. He called for the sharing of country experiences in international arrangement on forests, to provide guidance on future arrangements to be put in place.

MIKHAIL AMELYANOVICH, Minister of Forestry of Belarus, said a contemporary global forest policy was inseparable from the United Nations Forum on Forests. He added that the Forum was a process that provided a better quality of life for people who depended on forests, better protection of the environment and sustainable economic development.

ABDELADIM LHAFI, High Commissioner for Water, Forests and Combating Desertification, Morocco, said the Forum session was very important for the post-2015 development agenda and for giving new meaning to sustainable development. It was necessary to look at the social dimension of development. Morocco had taken an active role in all relevant regional and global debates, ratified all international conventions on the environment, and developed plans to combat desertification, protect biodiversity, mitigate the effects of climate change, and combat fires. A technical approach and expertise could only be useful if there was a vision that looked at land use as a whole and at the complexity of ecosystems. He called for a coherent policy that incorporated all the different sectors. It was necessary to simultaneously incorporate sustainable policies with technical approaches and land-use plans, within a legal framework. He called for the mobilization of funding that was sufficient to meet such challenges. Such matters could not wait.

MATHIEU BHAUD DARRET, Minister of Water and Forests, Cote d'Ivoire, said his country's crisis had caused the unprecedented looting of forest resources. To address that issue, the Government had classified forests as protected areas. He said the global trafficking of different species had led to the disappearance of natural resources and some of the species themselves. The Government had taken steps to stop such actions and to rebuild the country's forest heritage. It had begun to review and adopt legal texts and codes on forestry, hunting and water use. Enforcement of such rules had helped to trace wood products and to discourage the overuse of forest resources. The Government had also set up corridors with bordering countries to keep out invaders and it was working with neighbouring countries to fight transborder crime. While his Ministry had focused on awareness-raising and ensuring that forest remained integral to national development plans, had emphasized that Cote d'Ivoire lacked the necessary funding to fulfil all the costly tasks at hand. Indeed, it, like other African countries, was working to tackle many emergencies simultaneously.

KERRI-ANN JONES, Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs of the United States, said that policies and markets needed to better recognize and reward the contributions of forests to economic development. Informal forest economies and ecosystems, for example, were worth billions, but were not reflected in development planning or market calculations. Development policies, plans and investments needed to more carefully ensure that they did not destroy or degrade forests, particularly the remaining natural tropical forests, which continued to be lost at alarming rates. That did not mean constraining development, but meant practising a smarter kind of development addressing growing demands for food, minerals and energy in more efficient and environmentally-friendly ways.

SUN ZHAGEN, Vice-Minister, State Forest Administration of China, said that the current session, especially the ministerial segment, attested to the great importance the Forum attached to sustainable forest management. Citing various figures showing China's advances in sustainable forest management over the

past 20 years, he cautioned that the global trend in deforestation had not yet been reversed yet. He also highlighted unsound forest governance, calling for strong political will and better communication strategies. To reach consensus in the current session, China proposed to share best practices and success stories in such areas as capacity-building and transfer of technology. He also stressed the crucial role the United Nations played in consultations on forest-related issues, as well as the need of incorporating forests into discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals.

ALIREZA ORANGI, Deputy Minister of Jihad Agriculture, [Iran](#), said his country had created and implemented an Integrated Forest Conservation Programme in accordance with the proposals for action set forth by the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF). Its aim was to conserve forest resources by partnering with all relevant organizations. It had adopted a national action plan to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of the 2004 drought in line with sustainable land management objectives, namely to prevent soil erosion, conserve biodiversity, control drought, expand harvests on drylands and protect industrial and residential areas from moving sands.

He said that Iran was in the process of aligning that plan with the 10-year strategy of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Internationally, it played a key role in launching a collaboration framework for Low Forest Cover Countries. Last year in Tehran, it held the first Forest Financing Workshop on such countries, which aimed at identifying and removing financial barriers to sustainable forest management. Considering the paramount role of forests and unique ecosystems in those countries, the countries deserved a place in the international arrangements on forests.

LUIZ ALBERTO FIGUEIREDO MACHADO, Under-Secretary-General for Environment, Energy, Science and Technology, [Brazil](#), said his country had a forest cover that was larger than the entire European Union. Brazil had engaged actively in discussions of the Forum. Cooperation should be the basis for addressing forests and economic development. Forests had the potential to be powerful tools for such development. They should be a priority for national development agendas and strategy. Brazil was supporting cross-sectoral and cross-institutional sustainable forestry management policies. It had set up social, environmental and forestry-related funds. Financing was crucial for implementing sustainable forestry management. Forest-related public funds benefited Brazil and other tropical countries. All such initiatives were reducing deforestation and emissions.

He went on to say that in 2011, Brazil's deforestation rate was the lowest since 1988, and down by 20 per cent since 2010. Last year, the Government had approved a new Forest Act, which did not grant amnesty to landowners. It protected small farmers and created a different role for landowners and made provisions for reforestation financing and rehabilitation of illegally degraded areas. Sustainable forestry management was directly linked to poverty eradication. It was time to create a Global Forest Fund with adequate, predictable funds and to agree on a new forest economy with the fair sharing of benefits and respect for indigenous and local communities' knowledge and customs.

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* The 1st Meeting was covered in Press Release [ENV/DEV/1191](#) of 4 February 2011.

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