



SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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Esteemed Delegates,

I am happy to have been invited to address you today as part of the 19th session of the Committee on Forestry and the first World Forest Week. The theme of sustainable forest management and climate change could not be more relevant. I commend FAO on this excellent choice of topic, one which has not received nearly the attention it merits. I hope we may contribute to change that today.

As you know, the Secretary-General named 2009 the “Year of Climate Change”. This December, crucial inter-governmental negotiations will take place in Copenhagen. Our aim is to forge a new global agreement on climate change – a much-needed milestone if we are to turn the tide against this momentous challenge.

The latest IPCC report concluded that the warming of the planet is unequivocal. The climate is changing, most of the observed increase in global average temperature since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Global atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased as a result of human activity, and now far exceed pre-industrial values. Unless we succeed in cutting global emissions by more than half by 2050, we will have nothing

less than a climate crisis on our hands. Our scientists have given us a very clear message.

President Obama agrees that the science is beyond dispute, that the facts are clear, and that denial is no longer an acceptable response. I'm therefore tempted to say: Yes, we can.

It is irresponsible, reckless and deeply immoral to question the seriousness of the situation we are in. The time for diagnosis is over. Now is the time to act, and I say that as a doctor!

The road to Copenhagen

Copenhagen has four main political challenges that must be resolved at the highest political level and will determine the outcome of the negotiations.

First, Copenhagen must clarify commitments for developed countries to reduce their emissions, by setting ambitious mid-term targets. I commend those countries that have already indicated that they are ready to do so. We are all looking forward to the United States coming up with comparable efforts.

The Kyoto Protocol only contains concrete obligations for countries which are responsible for around 30% of present global emissions.

Secondly, we must therefore achieve clarity on what mitigation actions various developing countries will be prepared to make. I am encouraged by those countries that have already indicated that they are ready to enter into such discussions.

Thirdly, Copenhagen must move ahead on how to provide stable and predictable financing of the mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries.

Finally, an agreement must address the vitally important issue of technology development and dissemination.

The world's attention is now on the financial crisis, with its immediate and very concrete adverse effects on so many. The fact of the matter is that the world needs both to stimulate the economy and to secure sustainable

development. By designing a policy which stimulates green growth, we can reach both goals at the same time. As the Secretary General and Al Gore put it in Financial Times last month, we now need to make “growing green” our mantra.

The role of forests

So where do forests and sustainable forest management fit into this picture?

It goes without saying that if a climate agreement is to be effective, it must cover all sources of emissions.

Energy is, ofcourse, key. Sixty per cent of the relevant emissions are related to either production or use of energy. This will have to change.

But dealing with energy will not be enough. Close to eighteen per cent of global emissions stem from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. That is more than the emissions from the entire transport sector worldwide. And comparable to the total annual CO₂ emissions of the US or China. Deforestation therefore has to be included in the new climate change agreement. While forests were left out of the Kyoto protocol, it must now find its place within the broader solution to the climate challenge. To deal with deforestation effectively, we must develop a regime which creates the necessary incentives for developing countries to act in the broader interest of the global community and the planet.

Dealing with climate change involves difficult challenges, but also new opportunities. This year we can set the course for a more sustainable future, one that secures our survival and long-term prosperity. With a strong, balanced agreement in Copenhagen, we can begin to unleash the investments and innovation needed to build a new green economy for the 21st century.

We need new and bold measures to ensure that forests and sustainable forest management become key elements of the solution.

Some 1.6 billion people – 20 per cent of the world’s population - depend on forest resources for their livelihoods. Trade in forest products reached \$327 billion in 2004, representing nearly 4% of the global trade value of all commodity products. The world’s forests provide billions – if not trillions – of dollars of services to the global economy through biodiversity, soil

conservation and flood control, among many other functions. And nearly 60 percent of all global water ‘run off’ comes from forests.

I don’t think I need to convince you, as forestry experts, of the value of forests for sustainable development.

Forests as Carbon Source and Carbon Sink

Forests and climate change are intimately related, with forests serving both as a source of carbon, and as a carbon sink.

Forests store enormous amounts of carbon. In fact, the carbon contained in forests is more than that in the atmosphere. Deforestation alone accounts for 35 % of carbon emissions in developing countries and a very sizable 65% of carbon emissions in the least developed countries.

The Eliasch review estimates that halving deforestation could result in a net global economic gain of 3.7 trillion USD annually by the year 2100. Which makes it one of the most cost effective climate change mitigation measures available. The review concludes that the total cost of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius can be reduced by 50 per cent if forest related emissions are included in the global climate regime.

We must not lose sight of why forests are so important. We need to make sure forests contribute to making it possible to survive and thrive on this planet. It is imperative that climate projects are managed in a way which does not violate the legitimate rights of poor people to make a living. There are reports of women being driven away from traditional harvesting of nuts in West-Africa to give way to farming of plants for production of biodiesel. Environmental issues are also associated with large scale bio fuel production.

In another example, hundreds of people were reported to have been forced away from their lands in central Africa to give way to the planting of trees for carbon sequestration along the borders of a national park. People are reported to have been killed in conflicts over these lands.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is not the way to do it. Actions to deal with climate change are taken to save people’s lives. Violating people’s rights, depriving them of the bare necessities for survival is the opposite of what we

want to achieve. The core of sustainable development means that we are not only looking for a climate change effect for the benefit of future generations. Just as important is the life and opportunities for present generations.

I mentioned two examples of unacceptable behavior. In both cases, European companies were involved, together with local authorities. Unless we have stringent criteria and close cooperation between developed and developing countries, we run the risk of creating new problems, both for people and the environment in our search for solutions to safeguard the climate.

Fortunately there are also examples of carbon sequestration and bio-energy projects which are integrated with local production systems and based on local farmer's entitlement to the land on which they live or to acceptable compensation mechanisms. It is possible to achieve both a climate dividend and the right development pattern. Hardly anyone is better placed to contribute to preventing malpractice and to see to it that things are done in the right way, in cooperation with the local communities, than you who are here today.

Impacts of climate change on forests

How is climate change affecting the world's forests and what can we do to reduce this impact?

Forests around the world are being significantly affected by changes in temperature and rainfall associated with climate change. Increased temperatures and drought result in more frequent outbreaks of pest infestations, more forest fires and increasing alterations in populations of plant and animal species, severely affecting forest health and productivity. Due to this, forested areas will be changing in many regions.

Unfortunately, this is a negative feedback loop. By contributing to forest degradation and destruction, climate change is also exacerbating the release of carbon dioxide – further compounding global warming.

Take one example – the effects of the mountain pine beetle, which has become more prevalent due to warmer temperatures, on forests in western Canada. Over a 20 year period, 2000-2020, the cumulative destructive impact by the mountain pine beetle will be 270 megatonnes of carbon, which

is equal to the whole amount of greenhouse gas reductions Canada committed to by 2012 under the Kyoto Protocol.

An even more serious threat is posed by those who carry out or profit from illegal logging. The great value of forests is both a blessing and a curse. Strong links must be established with the efforts to combat corruption if we are to secure truly sustainable forest management. I remember when I first visited the tropical rain forest in Indonesia and the Amazon in Brazil in the mid-eighties. It struck me that even if the forest had been someone's private property, they would have been hard pressed to secure full control of such a vast area. I therefore fully appreciate the challenges many of you are facing in your very important work to secure monitoring and control.

Some estimate "slash and burn", or land use change, to amount to as much as 70% of deforestation, often motivated by a wish to grow crops for production of bio-fuels. This is clearly a self defeating strategy. We need to find ways to change this situation if we are to succeed in curbing global warming.

Actions to Move Forward

What do we need to do to address these inter-related challenges protecting global forests while combating climate change?

First, climate change and sustainable forest management policies need to be mutually supportive. Sustainable forest management is an important element in the overall effort to reduce carbon emissions and foster equitable long-term development.

In Bali in 2007, governments agreed to include Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in the climate negotiation package. It is crucial that countries now agree at Copenhagen to include reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in a post-2012 climate regime.

The UN has established a Collaborative Programme on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries. The UN-REDD Programme will create structures to support developing countries in designing national strategies to reduce carbon emissions resulting from forest loss. It will also establish systems for monitoring and verification.

UNEP, UNDP and FAO can draw on the experience and expertise of the entire UN-system. This cooperation is a historically unique example of the UN delivering as one, with the goal of managing the world's forests in a sustainable way. The combined effort of these three UN agencies with their different areas of expertise will deliver key climate benefits. It will also secure broader environmental benefits - the protection of biological diversity and ecosystem services, social benefits, contributing to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

At the moment, the first phase of the UN-REDD programme is funded by the Norwegian Government. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage other nations to join and to support it. The programme would benefit from the support of all members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests as they assist developing countries to build technical and institutional capacity for sustainable forest management.

The World Bank has established the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and is in the process of designing the Forest Investment Programme. These initiatives, which have an initial commitment of hundreds of millions of dollars, will enable countries to address the effects of deforestation in developing countries. I am happy to see the close cooperation that has been established between the UN-REDD programme and the World Bank initiatives.

In addition, the Congo Basin Forest Fund has been set up at the African Development Bank to secure early action to protect the forests of the Congo basin region. The Brazilian Government has established an "Amazon fund" – inviting donors to provide performance based support for activities that reduce deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon.

I am indeed encouraged to note the establishment of these and other important initiatives to promote early action and capacity building on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation. They clearly demonstrate that there is significant interest in, and commitment to REDD, both in developing and developed countries. Indeed, REDD could constitute one of those key bridges that are so urgently needed between developed and developing countries as the climate change negotiations progress towards Copenhagen.

An agreement on forests in Copenhagen is necessary, and sustainable forest management will be the most important tool to achieve reduced emissions. The agreement must establish a more robust, effective and sustainable system for mobilizing financial resources. It must include a results based mechanism for the distribution of these resources to tropical forest countries willing and able to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation or to conserve or enhance their carbon stock.

But an agreement in Copenhagen is not enough.

To unlock the true potential of REDD will require a high level of political will and commitment in the developing countries themselves to adjust their development path towards truly sustainable land and forest management. Governments must create institutional frameworks, forest legislation, regulations and incentives that reduce extensive conversion of land for large-scale agriculture production and illegal and unsustainable forest activities. Extensive capacity building to enhance the ability of developing countries to develop REDD strategies and implement them successfully will be crucial.

Our challenge is tremendous. All good forces must pull in the same direction. The Non Legally Binding Instrument on all types of forests adopted at the seventh UN Forum on Forests could contribute to this joint effort.

The next session of the UN Forum on Forest in April will continue discussions on a financing mechanism for sustainable forest management. If properly designed, such an instrument could complement the REDD-initiatives.

The time has come for the global community to take decisive action to implement an integrated and mutually supportive agenda for climate change and sustainable forest management. The fate of our forests – and indeed the fate of our planet – depends on our taking bold and decisive action this year.

Thank you.