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(Statement by Afghanistan)

Side Event: Forest and Energy

Thank you Chairperson!

The world continues to depend on fossil fuel for about 80 percent of its energy needs, a source that is the main contributor to global warming. This dependency is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Renewable energy, which is based on hydropower, biomass, wind and sun, accounts for approximately 13 percent of the world's energy consumption.

Biomass is made up of fuelwood, charcoal, crop residue and animal manure. Wood is the most important source of biomass. Fuelwood production, 90 percent of which comes from developing countries, is about 1.8 billion cubic meters annually and this is more than half of the world's wood removals. Almost all of the charcoal is produced and consumed in developing countries and its consumption is steadily rising. Currently, it is in the order of 45 million tons per year. The bulk of the world's biomass energy is consumed in the developing countries, about 70 percent of the total, and is used mainly for cooking and heating, with a smaller amount going for electricity generation, largely in Brazil.

In Afghanistan, all of our rural population and the great majority of our urban population derive their energy needs from fuelwood, charcoal, crop residues and manures. The prices of fuelwood and charcoal are steadily rising and is a main drain on the purchasing power of the population, especially the poor. In addition, with the rising cost of fossil fuel in the international market, the urban population of Afghanistan is under stress with high prices of kerosene, particularly in the winter

months. In meeting the rising demand for energy from biomass is a major concern to our society because the country's feedstock for bioenergy is limited.

Chairperson! The pros and cons of biofuel, which is an important topic in the world's development agenda, are well known. The main pros include:

- Contributing to the diversification of agriculture;
- Can make better use of degraded land;
- Contributes to a durable source of energy supply in rural areas;
- Being carbon-neutral, contributes to climate change mitigation.

The main cons include:

- Taking land from food crop production, especially in countries where land is scarce;
- Could contribute to rising prices of certain food commodities, like corn today;
- Could cause stress on water supply for food crops
- Could displace small farmers.
- Carries the danger of deforestation.

In meeting the future energy needs of our rising population, Afghanistan looks forward for a diversified source of energy involving our natural gas deposits, small and medium-scale hydropower, increasing the supply of fuelwood and charcoal, expanding biogas, and introducing wind energy and solar heating. The sustainable use of our limited natural forests, the expansion of community-based plantations for energy use and improving the use of crop residue can make substantive contribution to our future energy needs. Community plantations will also make it possible to make use of the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol.

Finally, Chairperson, we wish to stress the importance of three factors in making any nation meeting its energy needs. First is the necessity of having a comprehensive energy plan based on all potentialities. Secondly, a close monitoring of maintaining the balance between bio-energy and food security. Thirdly, improving technologies in the production and utilization of all forms of renewable energy.

Thank you Chairperson.