

## **FAO Conference Special Event: Forests and Energy**

**Rome, 20 November 2007**

### **Draft Statement to be presented by State Secretary Mrs. Branka Tome on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia**

Thank you Mr Chairperson

We welcome the initiative by the Director General to include an important issue of forests and energy on the agenda of this FAO conference session at a time when the FAO is at an important crossroad of revising its strategic focus and addressing the challenges of the new millennium.

Excellencies, distinguished Delegates,

Forests are the most developed terrestrial ecosystems and have accompanied civilizations since the dawn of mankind. In addition to sustaining wildlife and providing shelter and clean water, forests have been a source of wood as an essential raw material and energy source.

We should not forget that in Europe forests have supported economic development for a very long time and have been depleted drastically in many parts to the extent that required immediate reaction of governments for their preservation and sustainable use. Within the Pan-European Ministerial Process of Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) we acknowledged the importance of environmental, social and economic functions of forests and agreed that we will manage them sustainably for the benefit of present and future generations.

In many parts of Europe, including Slovenia, forests have recovered to a great extent. In times when it is becoming clear that fossil fuels, as the major energy source of our society, not only will not last forever, but will have to be replaced

with alternative sources of energy because of their impact on climate, we are turning back to forests with great expectations. But this time, building on negative experiences in the past as well as on scientific knowledge, we are much more aware of limitations we have to respect while using them in a sustainable way.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Wood cannot and should not be regarded solely from the viewpoint of using it directly for energy. Several studies show that the energy substitution effects of wood when used instead of other materials for construction and other purposes are even higher than its energy value. Wood products can also be used at the end of their life cycle for energy. This in fact doubles the energy efficiency of wood, provided that the recovered wood was efficiently and environmentally friendly burnt and not rotten somewhere in dumping grounds as frequently happens.

Therefore, we believe that development and promotion of wood processing industry is at least as important from the energy point of view as is the use of wood in the context of biofuels and we intend to support sustainable development in this respect. Nevertheless, direct use of low-quality wood for energy, particularly in combination with tending measures, such as thinning of pole stands, still has the future, particularly in mountainous rural areas where further improvement of its combustion efficiency is necessary as well.

To sum up, the following policy measures in the context of forest and energy are relevant for Slovenia as one of the most forested European countries:

1. Wood production capacity of forests should be improving steadily on the basis of forest management planning following the principles of close-to-nature and multifunctional forestry.
2. Due to high energy efficiency of wood in comparison to other raw materials, it is not wise to subsidize the use of wood for direct energy use, which

could lead to questionable distortion of the market also from energy perspective.

3. Incentives to encourage removal of wood from forests in accordance with forest management plans should be provided to overcome hindering factors, particularly in private forests.
4. Combustion efficiency should be improved for the use of wood as biofuel. Particular attention should be paid to combustion of disposed wood products (recovered wood), especially from the viewpoint of environmental standards.
5. Awareness should be built steadily among the general public of the beneficial environmental effects of using wood from forests managed in a sustainable way.

Slovenia is especially concerned with the development in the forestry sector, committed to sustainable development and employs its forestry policy in this respect. Cooperation between Slovenia and the FAO has so far delivered positive results and good experiences. Slovenia is more than willing to share its experiences and enhance the cooperation with FAO and all other actors concerned.

Thank you Mr Chairman.