



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. GENERAL BHEKI CELE, DEPUTY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS (New York, 13 May 2015)

Mr Chairman,

I have the distinct honour of presenting the perceptions of the members of the Group of 77 and China on the future international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 to this high-level segment of the eleventh session of the UN Forum on Forests.

Our delegations have been meeting over the last several days to consider the desirable course of direction we would want for the International Arrangement on Forests at the conclusion of this session. This has entailed not only reviewing the effectiveness of the current International Arrangement on Forests but also deciding on its future and its integration in the broader context of the development agenda beyond 2015.

The Group of 77 and China is of the view that the International Arrangement on Forests should play a key role in the promotion of sustainable forest management on a global scale. But, this can only be realized if there is an honest commitment towards strengthening the implementation of sustainable forest management.

Given the significance of the year 2015 because of summit level meetings relevant to forests that are taking place, it is important for this meeting to deliver a strengthened International Arrangement on Forests that continues to enhance the contribution and importance of forests in the context of sustainable development.

Strong efforts have to be made to promote and implement sustainable forest management in all its dimensions and to fully capture its contribution to improving human livelihoods and to poverty reduction.

Strengthening the International Arrangement of Forests should focus on attaining tangible and real measures that will result in providing added value to forest policy at the global level and in addressing the weaknesses related to the implementation and financing of the Instrument.

Mr Chairman,

While engagements among our experts in the last several days have shown an aversion to strengthen the financing of sustainable forest management, the Group of 77 and China continues to believe that the most effective means for dealing with forest financing issues on a global scale would be through the establishment of a Global Forest Fund. Reluctance to deal with this does not eliminate the need to assist developing countries and provide new and additional financial resources to them to continuously promote sustainable forest management taking into account different visions, approaches, models and tools to achieve sustainable development and to ensure full implementation of the forest instrument, the Global Objectives on Forests and all goals and targets that relate to forests.

It has always been the group's position that the proposed fund should have simple modalities to

ensure that developing countries can have access to these funds.

Mr Chairman,

The Group would also like to reiterate its view that the strengthening of the UNFF Secretariat cannot be left unattended any longer. Tangible means are needed to strengthen its capacity and provision of human and financial resources that are adequate, predictable and commensurate to the mandate and function assigned to the UNFF. It is unfathomable to expect an increase in the responsibilities of the Secretariat without the commensurate means to fulfil its mandate.

It is also important to highlight the need to consider further developments that help us find concrete ways to strengthen forest-related issues, including the consideration of possible alternatives to advance non-binding mechanisms, as well as the strengthening of the follow-up and review of our agreements.

In conclusion Mr Chairman,

It is worth reiterating that, while the Group of 77 and China acknowledges the achievements of the current International Arrangement of Forests, it strongly advocates for the future arrangement on forests to be strengthened so that it will make a real impact with regards to:

- Catalysing the implementation of and financing for sustainable forest management;
- Integrating the future International Arrangement of Forests in the broader development agenda beyond 2015; and
- Strategic planning and fostering collaboration and participation.

Thank you!