



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS (New York, 4 May 2015)**

Mr Chairman,

I have the distinct honour of presenting the views of the members of the Group of 77 and China to this eleventh session of the UN Forum on Forests that will not only review the effectiveness of the current International Arrangement on Forests but more importantly decide on the future International Arrangement on Forests and its integration in the broader context of the development agenda beyond 2015.

The Group would like to thank the Bureau for the two non-papers containing possible elements for the zero draft Ministerial Declaration and draft Resolution.

As we craft a future International Arrangement on Forests, it is worth reiterating that the year 2015 is of critical importance because of summit level meetings relevant to forests that are being convened, such as the Third International Conference on Financing for Development taking place in Addis Ababa in July, the Summit on the post-2015 development agenda in September and the Paris Climate Conference in December.

For us developing countries, it is therefore of critical importance that the Ministerial Declaration and the Resolution that we are going to craft in the next several days will emerge with a strengthened International Arrangement on Forests that continues to enhance the contribution and importance of forests in the context of sustainable development, including for poverty eradication.

Mr Chairman,

While specificities on the Ministerial Declaration and the Resolution will be tendered during engagements in the informal consultations on these outcome documents, the group would like to make the following initial and broad points on the non-paper possible elements that were distributed by the UNFF11 Bureau:

- The Group of 77 and China acknowledges the achievements of the current International Arrangement on Forests and is of the view that it must be strengthened for it to make a real impact, catalyse the implementation and facilitate the mobilisation of increased, predictable and sustainable financing for the implementation of sustainable forest management.
- Strengthening the Forum should focus on attaining tangible and real measures that will result in enhanced policy coherence and in addressing the weaknesses related to implementation and financing of forest instruments.
- A focus on renaming the Forum without actually upgrading it is a cosmetic action and serves the purpose of detracting from the sorely needed work of strengthening it.
- Informed by the need to assist developing countries and to strengthen the financing of sustainable forest management, the group will engage in the informal consultations seeking to fulfil its call for the establishment of a dedicated Global Forest Fund. The Fund shall aim to provide new and

additional financial resources to developing countries to continuously promote sustainable forest management and to ensure full implementation of the forest instrument, the Global Objectives on Forests and all goals and targets that relate to forests.

- The proposed fund should have simple modalities to ensure that developing countries can have access to these funds.

- In its engagements, the Group of 77 and China will work towards ensuring that the resolution addresses the strengthening of the UNFF Secretariat, including its capacity and provision of human and financial resources that are adequate, predictable and commensurate to the mandate and function assigned to the UNFF.

- The non-paper on possible elements for a resolution refers to a "special envoy/representative on forests" - it is not clear what the role of the envoy would be or how this could benefit the UNFF. More clarity is sought by the Group on the rationale behind this proposal for a special envoy.

- To bring about consistency with the other unfolding processes, especially in strengthening synergies with forest-related SDGs and targets, we would call for language that talks about "follow up and review" rather than "monitor, assess and report" which is the current language in the non-paper on possible elements.

These, Mr Chairman, are our initial comments. The Group looks forward to engaging in a constructive manner and working towards a fruitful outcome of the Forum during the next two weeks.

Thank you