



**Statement by Mr. Mohammed Arrouchi, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, at the opening of the 3rd session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (Geneva, 26 May 2003)**

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, allow me at the outset to congratulate you as well as the other members of the Bureau, for your election to lead us during this very important session of the UNFF, which is taking place two weeks after the 11th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development has clearly defined the implementation track of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of WSSD.

I would like also to thank Mr. Pekka PATOSAARI, Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat for his comprehensive presentation. Our thanks go as well to the other members of the Secretariat for their commendable efforts during the preparatory process of this session and for the good quality of the documents submitted for our consideration.

Mr. Chairman,

During the establishment of our Forum, UNFF, we have unanimously recognized that the social, economic and environmental well-being of the world's population is closely associated with the effective management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests which cover nearly one-third of the planet earth's landscape.

On this basis, the UNFF has been entrusted with a highly important mission, the main objective of which is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end.

Aware of the importance of this mandate and the complexity of forest issues, the Group would like to reiterate its strong commitment to the RIO Declaration on Environment and Development, the Forest Principles and Chapter 11 of Agenda 21, the proposals for action of the IPF/IFF as well as the outcomes of WSSD.

Mr. Chairman,

The 3rd session of the UNFF is taking place at the mid-road of the multi-year program of work, while big challenges still obstruct endeavors by developing countries to attain the goal of sustainable forest management

We strongly believe that the effective implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action is of crucial importance to reverse the trends of high rate of worldwide deforestation as well as forest and land degradation.

In this regard, we are deeply concerned by the alarming global natural forest loss which, according to FAO estimates, exceeds 14.6 million hectares each year.

Consequently, it is incumbent on all of us to strive to meet our responsibilities to ensure a real sustainable forest management in order to preserve our forests which constitute a source of life for all that depends on it.

Mr. Chairman,

Since Rio, significant progress has been made in the formulation of a solid repertoire of commitments on actions pertaining to sustainable forest management, mainly by the IPF/IFF processes and the UNFF.

The UNFF work should, therefore, focus on the identification of effective and coherent approaches to ensure the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for actions as well as to promote the implementation of forest - related decisions made by various inter-governmental fora.

In this regard, the Group of 77 and China is looking forward to a constructive discussion of the means of implementation with respect to the substantive Agenda items related to 1/Economic aspects of Forests, 2/Forest health and productivity and 3/Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs.

The focus on means of implementation has been underlined as a matter of priority of the UNFF multi-year program of work in ECOSOC resolution 2000/35. According to paragraph 9 of this resolution, the UNFF should, as a matter of priority, complete, in the context of the multi-year program of work, its consideration of the issue related to: "approaches towards appropriate financial and technology transfer support to enable the implementation of sustainable forest management as recommended under IPF and IFF processes".

We would like to reiterate in this regard that during the adoption of the multi-year program of work of the UNFF (2001-2005), we have unanimously recognized "the importance of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building, including the importance of international trade in wood and non-wood products, in all types of forests and in both developed and developing countries, including least developed countries and countries with low forest cover and countries with fragile eco-systems, for the realization of the aims of the multi-year program of work of the Forum".

UNFF 3 should, therefore, focus its discussions on ways and means to ensure real progress in enhancing international cooperation in financial assistance, technology transfer and capacity building that would foster sustainable forest management, particularly in developing countries.

We would like to underline in this respect that despite the continuous efforts undertaken by developing countries to attain the objective of sustainable forest management, numerous difficulties, mainly the lack of sufficient and reliable means of implementation, remains the major obstacle encountered by these countries in implementing their respective national programs with regard to forest management, conservation and sustainable development.

It should also be recalled, that the RIO Declaration on Environment and Development, the relevant chapters of Agenda 21, the provisions of the Forest Principles as well as those of JPOI stated clearly that new and additional financial resources should be provided to developing countries to enable them to sustainably manage, conserve and develop their respective forest resources.

In this context, we would like to underline that promoting sustainable forest management through private sector actions should not diminish inter-governmental partnership between developed and developing countries. This partnership remains indispensable for the attainment of an effective sustainable forest management.

Mr. Chairman,

Given the importance of the inter-sessional work in advancing the objectives of the Forum through scientific and technical advice, the Group, while reiterating its support for the creation of the ad-hoc expert groups, would like to emphasize the paramount importance it attaches to the issue of membership of these groups. The Group is looking forward to a constructive and transparent discussion of this issue during this session.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group strongly holds the view that through an effective and accountable process of implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, we can ensure a real sustainable forest management for the well-being of our populations.

The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate its readiness to engage constructively into a meaningful discussion of all substantive agenda items under consideration, with the aim to achieve substantive progress in implementing the proposals for action of the Inter-governmental Panel on Forests/Inter-governmental Forum on Forests at the national, regional and global levels.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.