



STATEMENT BY MS. RANJANA GUPTA, MEMBER OF INDIAN DELEGATION,
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS, AT THE EIGHTH SESSION OF
UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS ON APRIL 20, 2009

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful to the Chair for providing the opportunity to make a statement on behalf of my delegation. I would like to associate myself with the statement made by Sudan on behalf of G-77.

India has been participating actively in the international dialogue on Forests at different Fora and is committed to Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), achieving the four global objectives on forests and implementing the Non Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on all types of forests. The information on implementing the NLBI and progress towards achieving the four Global Objectives on Forests has already been submitted by India. The National forest policy of 1988, formulated four years before the Rio- summit, embodies the principles of sustainable forest management, involvement of local communities, empowerment of women and increase in forest and tree cover. The basic principles elucidated in the NLBI are enshrined in the National Forest Policy, 1988 of the country and the forestry management practices in the country, which are governed by the institution of working plans / management plans which are being fine-tuned, wherever required, for their implementation under the overall umbrella of Sustainable Forest Management principles. The thrust of forestry programmes in the country, ever since adoption of National Forest Policy, 1988 has been on the involvement of local communities in the protection, afforestation and reforestation, overall management of the forest areas including the protected area network. The total forest and tree cover of the country has been assessed as 23.4% of the total geographic area. Forests are mostly managed for conservation and ecological security purposes. India's national Protected Area covers around 4.8 % of country's geographical area.

At the Global level, the establishment of United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) aimed at

addressing the forest-related issues in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner have been successful in promoting better understanding of SFM related issues as well as in facilitating coordination among forest-related instruments and processes. National Forest Programmes (NFPs) have been formulated in many countries in response to international commitments and in conformity with the IPF/IFF proposals for action. With the limited financial resources at their command, and with competing demands for developmental programmes, many of the developing countries have not been in a position to allocate adequate resources for NFPs. It is imperative that this aspect is given due consideration in the deliberations on actions for the future. For most of the conservation efforts in India, funds come largely from the Central and State Governments only. However, there is need for greater International Assistance in this regard.

Forests are inseparably linked with the livelihoods of people living in and around forests and sustainable forest management thus contributes to the efforts towards poverty eradication. In 1990, the Government of India adopted the principles of "Joint Forest Management (JFM)" for the involvement of village communities and voluntary agencies in the protection and development of degraded forests that have effectively contributed to the efforts towards eradication of poverty.

The JFM Programmes are being implemented throughout the country and there is National support for JFM through National Afforestation Programme operated by the National Afforestation and Eco-development Board, with main objectives of:

- Regeneration and eco-development
- Augmentation of availability of fuelwood, fodder and grasses
- Securing people's participation in planning and regeneration

Forest resources differ from one region to another as well as within a given region. India is one of the 12-mega bio-diverse countries having variety of floral and faunal species. There are 16 major forest types, varying from alpine pasture in Himalayas to temperate forests, sub-tropical forests, and mangroves in the coastal line. There is adequacy of policy, legal and institutional framework in India for the effective conservation of Forests & wildlife resources in the country. Prominent amongst them are the National Forest Policy 1988, National Environment Policy, 2006, Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, etc.

India has national Schemes and Programmes for strengthening the effective management of Forests & wildlife resources. Further, India has special

programmes such as Integrated Forest management, National Afforestation Programme, 'Project Tiger', 'Project Elephant', 'Project Snow Leopard', etc, which are aimed at recovery of critically endangered species and their habitats alongwith improved protection of forests/ maintenance & extension of Forest & Tree Cover. India has recognized the need for integrating livelihood aspirations of local people living in and around the Protected Areas through various non-consumptive eco-development programmes. India has also established a National Wildlife Crime Control Bureau in 2007 for combating wildlife crime in a focused manner. The Country is signatory to several Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) on Forests & wildlife matters like CITES, CMS, IWC, CBD, ITTA etc.

To achieve the objective of SFM, following steps have been taken:

- SFM Cell has been constituted in the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India, to act as a Nodal body for policy matters at the Central Level.
- All State Forest Departments have been advised to constitute SFM cells which would be headed by the Officer dealing with the Working Plan in the respective State/UTs Forest Departments.
- National set of 8 Criteria (C) and 37 Indicators (I) have been developed through multi-stakeholder consultative processes by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, to assess and monitor changes towards sustainability of forests.
- National Set of C & I is also being pilot tested by Ministry's expert teams in states covering wider area and forest types in the country. Further, different sets of C & I are being developed specifically for sustainable management of plantations, non-timber forest products by expert committees constituted by the Ministry
- Team of experts also constituted to prepare a document namely "Revised Working Plan Code" incorporating the final draft Criteria & Indicator for SFM into the Working Plan Code.
- Ministry has constituted the 'National Forest Certification Committee' for the development of Certification Criteria, Certification Process and Accreditation Criteria & Process.

However, for the implementation of C&I for SFM, additional financial support is needed.

India's position on the four Global Objectives is:

(i) Government of India is committed to SFM - The National Forest Policy 1988 lays emphasis on environmental stability & maintenance of ecological balance with active stakeholders' participation and benefit sharing & envisages that one third of total geographical area be under forest and tree cover . Forest Survey of India does forest cover mapping on a biennial basis. The 10th State of Forest Report published in 2008 as State of Forest Report (SFR), 2005 indicates that forest cover is 20.60% (677088 sq. km.) and trees outside forest 2.79% (91663 sq. km.) of total geographical area of the country.

(ii) 'The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006' & JFM Rules provide for livelihoods of forest dependent people

(iii) Instruments of Working Plans & Protected Area Plans are supported through GOI Schemes to increase area of sustainably managed forests.

(iv) Additional financial resources are mobilised through integration of Schemes like NREGS & Externally aided projects

We would support strengthening of the existing international arrangement on forests to address the gaps and facilitate actions. The principal task before us is to identify priority areas and focus attention on such issues at international level that would facilitate actions at the national level to achieve sustainable forest management, keeping in view their circumstances, and, at the same time, promote actions for support to developing countries in capacity building as well as in meeting the financing gap.

The UNFF can play a key role in creating complementarities among the forest-related conventions and relevant forest organizations, bodies and processes for the better use of resources, expertise, less likelihood of overlaps of duplication of efforts, better communication and dissemination of information. The forum may also guide the members of the CPF to focus their mandate on financial resource, transfer of technology and capacity building needed for the implementation of Non Legally Binding Instruments on all types of forests and to achieve the four global objectives on forests.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)