



Statement of  
Eduardo Rojas-Briaies  
Assistant Director-General, FAO Forestry  
Chair, Collaborative Partnership on Forests  
04 February 2014, 8<sup>th</sup> Open Working Group, UN HQ, New York

Mr. Csaba Kőröri, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the United Nations,  
Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests,  
Major Groups and Special Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva, I would like to thank the Co-Chairs of this Open Working Group (OWG) for allowing FAO to make this intervention on behalf of FAO and the 14 members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF).

Many of you know FAO for its work to end hunger and food insecurity in the world. FAO, along with the 22 agencies of the High Level Task Force on Global Food Security, is leading UN-system efforts to tackle the Zero Hunger Challenge – an important part of the post-2015 development agenda –. FAO is as well working in the areas that are considered in this OWG session -- oceans, biodiversity, forests and mountains. Our ability to sustainably manage and preserve oceans, forests, mountains and biodiversity is key for the future of food security, for overcoming rural poverty and for ensuring the environmental services they sustain. But our progress in these areas is hampered by unsustainable practices, climate change, lack of land use planning, poor governance, lack of financial resources and limited capacities.

The preservation of oceans, forests, mountains and biodiversity cannot be seen in isolation from the needs of humans, especially those living in rural areas heavily dependent on these natural resources. Achieving sustainable management of these natural resources while integrating biodiversity protection; disaster risk reduction strategies; soil and water protection and mitigation and adaptation to climate change, is the single possibility for sustaining the expected 9 billion people in the planet in 2050. FAO is promoting such efforts through its normative and country-level work in this sense.

### **BIODIVERSITY**

To date, as the Issue Brief on Biodiversity and the Convention on Biological Diversity's strategic plan notes, the most helpful way to retain biodiversity is by valuing, conserving, restoring and widely using it while maintaining ecosystem services. FAO fully supports the

ongoing efforts taken by its collaborator under the CPF, the Convention on Biological Diversity, in the achievement of its twenty Aichi Targets. These targets and other FAO instruments working on biodiversity under the guidance of the Commission on Genetic Resources such as the Global Plans of Action on Plant, Animal and Forest Genetic Resources for food and agriculture provide concrete examples on how to make progress on this important issue. FAO is also helping to produce the first ever State of the World Forest Genetic Resources report.

## **OCEANS AND FISHERIES**

Oceans and fisheries warrant special attention as well. Nearly 17% of animal protein consumed worldwide comes from fisheries and aquaculture, and in many small island developing states the figure is much higher. Fish and seafood are among the most traded food commodities, valued at nearly US\$130 billion. Employment in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors has grown faster than the world's population and faster than employment in traditional agriculture.

As the demand for fish and fishery products continues to rise, so do opportunities for economic growth. However, economic losses are estimated at US\$50 billion per year in marine fisheries, resulting from poor management, inefficiencies, overfishing, marine degradation and pollution. And now climate change is posing new challenges to populations who rely on the oceans, in particular for small island developing states.

Major changes in how the planet's marine resources are managed and used are needed to safeguard global food security and ensure the wellbeing of coastal and island countries.

Based on the Blue Economy Concept that emerged at Rio+20, FAO is establishing a new initiative on Blue Growth in Support of Food Security, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Management of Aquatic Resources. The blue economy concept emphasizes conservation and sustainable management of ocean ecosystems to ensure sustainable ocean-based economies. It also aims to ensure that small island developing states and developing world coastal states equitably benefit from their marine resources. And Blue Growth strategies can move forward progress in this regard.

## **MOUNTAINS**

Let me now address another important but often overlooked area: mountains.

Mountain peoples are among the world's poorest. In developing countries, a vast majority live below the poverty line and an estimated 300 million are food insecure. Mountain dwellers often belong to indigenous groups and minorities that are politically, socially and economically excluded. Women and children who live in mountain areas are at high risk of hunger and malnutrition and are often excluded from decisions affecting the management and use of local resources. Mountains provide a substantial amount of the world's freshwater and are a key hotspot of biodiversity. If well forested and managed, they are

crucial to avoiding downstream damages as floods, avalanches and other disasters that cause many casualties.

Following the inclusion of mountains in Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and three paragraphs in 'The Future We Want', can we possibly risk not having them included in the Sustainable Development Goals? FAO and the Mountain Partnership Secretariat hosted at FAO looks forward to continuing the discussions further on how best to integrate mountains in the SDGs.

### **FORESTS AND THE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP ON FORESTS**

As Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, or CPF, a mechanism of 14 international organizations, institutions and UN Secretariats, I cannot emphasize enough the opportunity the global community has to make a difference to the world's forests through the new SDGs.

Sustainable management of all types of forests and trees outside forests underpin green economies, accelerate eradication of poverty, and help to sustain "the Future We Want". Forests cover nearly a third of global land area, provide habitat for over 80 per cent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity and store more carbon than the atmosphere. They provide food, shelter, medicines and fuel for cooking. The formal forest sector's contribution to the global economy is estimated to be nearly US\$ 468 billion, accounting for nearly 1 per cent of global GDP. Forests offer cross-cutting benefits to address pressing sustainable development challenges, including for other issues being discussed at the 8<sup>th</sup> OWG.

Yet, deforestation and land-use changes contribute to 17 per cent of human-generated carbon dioxide emissions, and result in loss of valuable economic assets and livelihood opportunities. In addition, increasing urbanization and changing consumption patterns are driving large-scale agricultural production, which often spurs conversion of forest land to crop land and pastures.

But there is good news. The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration formed by several CPF members have identified over 2 billion hectares of land that offer the possibility for landscape restoration without affecting food security, which is particularly important in the dry tropics. Forest landscape restoration promotes broader, integrated multi-use landscapes, reinforcing synergies between forests and other land uses such as agriculture and protected reserves, enhancing productivity, as well as resilience and other ecosystem functions. Its many benefits include supporting the achievement of the global Aichi Biodiversity Target 15, to restore at least 15 percent of degraded ecosystems.

Initiatives of REDD+ are also helping to restore forests, but greater efforts are needed in this regard. If you recall, forest landscape restoration was the second most voted action by civil society during the Rio Dialogues. It supplements and strengthens the progress of REDD+ on the ground while moving from stopping to reverting deforestation.

For all these reasons we ask you to consider fully integrating forests in a visible, consistent and coherent way as a priority area in the post-2015 UN development agenda and the future SDGs.

When identifying targets and indicators for the contribution of forests to sustainable development, we do not need to start from scratch. We know that it's possible for all the world's forests to be managed sustainably. We know that the world's forests and tree resources can be improved. We know we can design goals that capture a wide range of socio-economic benefits. We can build on international agreements and commitments such as the Aichi targets, Bonn Challenge, which already exist. To obtain further information on the connection between forests and food security, the CPF has recently initiated a global scientific assessment on forests and food security.

To assist you in your near-term deliberations CPF members have worked together to provide a global analysis of international instruments related to forests. Based on this analysis, we have prepared an analytical document and summary for negotiators that outline possible targets and indicators on forests in the SDGs that will be shared with you in the coming days. We hope this will help you in your deliberations.

In closing allow me as UN Commissioner-General for EXPO Milan 2015, which as you know is devoted to food issues, to recall the chance that the UN and countries have to highlight the interconnected challenges being tackled by the SDG process. Together, through the SDGs, we can improve the management and preservation of our natural resources and find ways to end hunger in our world.

Thank you.