

**Statement by Stewart Maginnis
Head, Forest Conservation Programme**

May 28, 2003

Mr. Chairman,

As stated in the Secretary-General's report on Enhancing Cooperation, and as many distinguished delegates have clearly mentioned this morning, a major recent development that has a profound impact on the forest sector and provides new opportunities for the UNFF for cooperation and coordination is the Millennium Development Goals. The report also refers to the Plan of Implementation from the World Summit on Sustainable Development which identified sustainable forest management as a critical means to eradicate poverty.

IUCN - The World Conservation Union considers that it is neither ethically acceptable nor practically feasible to pursue the conservation of forest biological diversity in those parts of the world that suffer from widespread endemic poverty without tackling the spectre of poverty head on. A 50% reduction in the number of people living in absolute poverty is one of the most urgent milestones in achieving sustainable development and we believe that conservation and sustainable management of forests has to be enlisted in the fight against poverty. IUCN is therefore committed to supporting governments and civil society in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and in the implementation of the UNFF Plan of Action and other international commitments on forests, and therefore would welcome the opportunity to contribute to enhanced cooperation in this area.

Countries need to ensure that the international forest policy arena is better aligned with the concerns and priorities of the broader international community in a post-WSSD world in order to allow forest issues to regain the attention of decision-makers and funding they used to enjoy, and to support implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and other international commitments related to forests. The UN Forum on Forests has an important role to play in making this happen.

Given that forests do play a critical role in the lives of the rural poor and of forest-dependent communities everywhere, the forest dialogues in the UNFF and elsewhere need to be linked to the Millennium Development Goals - conceptually and in practice through implementation action. This link is not only relevant to MDG 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability, but also to the other goals relating to poverty, health, education, gender, etc.

While some of these issues are expected to receive more detailed attention at UNFF-4 in connection with the Social and Cultural Aspects of Forests, they are also critical to the UNFF-3 agenda, including Enhancing Cooperation, Economic Aspects of Forests, Maintaining Forest Cover, and National Forest Programmes.

UNFF-3 therefore has the responsibility and opportunity to recognize these important linkages and to establish a solid basis for fruitful intersessional cooperation in preparation for UNFF-4.

With specific reference to Enhancing Cooperation, IUCN recommends that the UNFF should:

- Recognize the synergies between the UNFF Plan of Action and the Millennium Development Goals.
- Urge countries to mainstream forests into poverty reduction strategies and other related processes, and improve links between those processes and national forest programmes.
- Request the Head of the UNFF Secretariat to collaborate with the UN Millennium Project, interested CPF members (including the World Bank, UNDP and CIFOR) and Major Groups to prepare for a thorough review and analysis at UNFF-4 of steps taken to strengthen these linkages, obstacles encountered and factors contributing to success.

IUCN would be happy to participate actively in this process.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.