

Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

For many, forests are places of recreation. For others, it's their livelihood.

Before climate change dominated the environmental agenda, deforestation was a central concern. I guess most of us remember this.

We should continue to be concerned.

Forests contain seventy per cent of the world's biodiversity. Forests provide vital ecosystem services: Flood control. Soil protection.

They support the subsistence livelihoods of up to 300 million people, most of who are poor.

And unfortunately, despite some local successes, efforts to combat deforestation and rapid global forest loss have failed.

Fact is, between 2000 and 2005, roughly thirteen million hectares of forest disappeared – each year.

The threat of climate change has created a new imperative – and renewed hope – to protect the values and services rendered by tropical forests.

We know that forests have a vital role to play in the fight against global warming.

Because it's the largest terrestrial store of carbon. The third largest source of carbon emissions after coal and oil. And because the IPCC estimates that deforestation contributes twenty per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The forestry sector was largely excluded from the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period. Now that we are closing in on a post-Kyoto agreement, reduced emissions from deforestation in developing countries, has emerged as a key issue.

The European Union says:

It is necessary to halt the loss of forest cover latest by 2030. It is crucial to reduce gross tropical deforestation by at least fifty per cent by 2020 compared to the present situation.

If we can't manage this, the two degree target will be very difficult to keep.

But questions of how to design and implement a mechanism to achieve REDD are difficult and the answers sometimes controversial.

And so, people become unsure whether it really will generate real benefits for the global climate, for our forests and for our forest communities.

And so the approach must be broader than to just reduce deforestation. In the Bali Action Plan we have the REDD+ concept.

That is: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Enhancement of Carbon Stocks, Conservation, and Sustainable Forest Management in Developing Countries.

Now we will need to scale up financial resources for this. For preparatory activities, for results-based payments and for investments based on national plans.

I believe if we succeed in this, it will generate economic benefits for developing countries – including their indigenous peoples and local communities.

And it will also help conserving biodiversity, protecting water supplies, and providing the long-term REDD+ process with vital information and experience.

I believe immediate action on REDD+ should be included in the Copenhagen agreement. It's an important step in the right direction – for our people, for the biodiversity of our forests, and for our climate.