

**Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
For a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe**

2nd Session

Monday, 3 September 2012, Bonn, Germany

Opening Address by

Jan Heino

Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you to start our Second Session.

Let me thank the German Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection for hosting the session and providing us with the venue and the opportunity to meet in the great city of Bonn, close to the Rhine river .

Now it is up to us to make the best use of the facilities provided. We are about to enter the most intense period of work in preparing a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe.

In your hands and for consideration is the Bureau's draft of the negotiating text. The proposal draws on your guidance from the First Session held in Vienna. The draft intends to enable Parties to start negotiations and provide inputs – it is a draft for negotiations; it's not a negotiated draft.

To repeat myself from INC1, my intention is to do everything possible to facilitate your work. I will give you opportunity to provide inputs, to discuss and clarify issues with the aim to advance the text by concluding on the formulation of as many paragraphs as possible.

I am convinced that through the upcoming negotiations, Parties of the Committee will raise the draft text to a higher level of ambition and make it more solid.

In this connection, allow me to raise some issues as examples of those matters that would merit special consideration during this week.

First, let me turn to one very substantive part of the text: commitments.

These commitments will form the main body or content of the agreement. The Oslo Mandate and the guidance from INC1 outlined a good basis for drafting this section of the negotiating text.

We will need to discuss objectives, principles and commitments to be part of this agreement. How to formulate and interlink them, building on achievements accomplished so far? How to keep or even elevate the level of ambition, still keep it acceptable for all, noting the diversity of national conditions and priorities?

Second, a possible compliance mechanism.

During this session the Committee is expected to provide guidance for the development of a section on compliance.

How should a compliance mechanism be designed for ensuring effective implementation of the agreement? What scope, procedures, measures and institutional mechanisms should we aim at, for an open, simple, cooperative and cost effective mechanism? INC1 decided to defer these issues to the next session, so now is the time to discuss these issues and set the course for the further work.

Third, institutional arrangements for the agreement

At this Session the Committee will consider paragraph 24g. of the Oslo Mandate “*the possibility of the agreement being brought under the United Nations umbrella*” and provide further guidance for addressing paragraph 24f.

What arrangements, rules and structure should be designed to ensure prompt, operational and effective implementation?

None of these questions are easy nor can they be resolved at once. But we have a whole week in front of us and we have an impressive number of parties and observers present, with strong delegations representing a multitude of expertise and experience. Every condition is given to successfully deliver on our mandate.

About half a year ago you gave the Bureau the challenging job of developing the first draft of the negotiating text. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Bureau members and secretariat colleagues for their hard work and commitment. I am proud to present to you the result of our work, acknowledging that it is neither complete nor perfect. Now it is your turn to express your views and make your mark on the draft. I am confident that through dynamic, transparent and open negotiations you will elevate the draft text to a new level.

At this session we also need to plan our future work, decide on intersessional activities and provide guidance for preparations for INC3.

The Bureau and the secretariat will do everything to support you in this work and we are happy to receive your guidance.

I want to conclude by saying that the spirit of compromise is the guarantee for good progress. I am confident that you will maintain this spirit and that we will see the kind of robust outcome from this session that we all have come here for.

Thank you.