

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT

ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

Member States,

Recognizing that forests and trees outside forests provide multiple economic, social and environmental benefits, and emphasizing that sustainable forest management contributes significantly to sustainable development and poverty eradication,

Recognizing the impact of climate change on forests and sustainable forest management, as well as the contribution of forests to addressing climate change,

Reaffirming the special needs and requirements of countries with fragile forest ecosystems, including those of low-forest-cover countries,

Stressing the need to strengthen political commitment and collective efforts at all levels, to include forests in national and international development agendas, to enhance national policy coordination and international cooperation and to promote intersectoral coordination at all levels for the effective implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests,

Emphasizing that effective implementation of sustainable forest management is critically dependent upon adequate resources, including financing, capacity development and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and recognizing in particular the need to mobilize increased financial resources, including from innovative sources, for developing countries, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition,

Also emphasizing that implementation of sustainable forest management is also critically dependent upon good governance at all levels,

Noting that States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies and have the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, the provisions of this instrument do not prejudice the rights and obligations of Member States under international law,

Have committed themselves as follows:

- (1) States have the sovereign and inalienable right to utilize, manage and develop their forests for their own benefit and in accordance with their development needs and level of socio-economic development and on the basis of national policies consistent with sustainable development and legislation, including the conversion of such areas for other uses within the overall socio-economic development plan and based on rational land-use policies.
- (2) Forest resources and forest lands should be sustainably managed to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations. These needs are for forest products and services, such as wood and wood products, water, food, fodder, medicine, fuel, shelter, employment, recreation, habitats for wildlife, landscape diversity, carbon sinks and reservoirs, and for other forest products. Appropriate measures should be taken to protect forests against harmful effects of pollution, including air-borne pollution, fires, pests and diseases, and climate change impacts in order to maintain their full multiple value.
- (3) States develop, in accordance with existing international agreements on forests and existing non-binding forest principles, and taking into account relevant agreements on biodiversity and climate change, national forest certification schemes and related principles and indicators for sustainable forest management. Principles and indicators shall be science-based and as or more stringent than principles and indicators of existing private non-state certification schemes.
- (4) The agreed full incremental cost of achieving benefits associated with forest conservation and sustainable development through national certification schemes requires increased international cooperation and should be equitably shared by the international community via an international forest certification and sustainable forest management fund.
- (5) The provision of timely, reliable and accurate information on forests and forest ecosystems is essential for public understanding and informed decision-making and should be ensured.
- (6) Governments should promote and provide opportunities for the participation of interested parties, including local communities and indigenous people, industries, labour, non-governmental organizations and individuals, forest dwellers and women, in the development, implementation and planning of national forest certification.
- (7) National policies and strategies should provide additional supportive frameworks for increased efforts, including the development and strengthening of institutions and programmes for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and forest lands.
- (8) Unilateral measures, incompatible with international obligations or agreements, to restrict and/or ban international trade in timber or other forest products should be removed or avoided, in order to attain long-term sustainable forest management.