

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Miloš Koterec,  
Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic  
Roundtable on Forests and Rio+20, Ninth Session of the United Nations  
Forum on Forests  
February 3, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

Let me share with you briefly the views of the Slovak Government regarding the inseparable link between the issue of the forests and the themes of the Rio Plus 20 Conference, in particular, the theme of a green economy.

At first, I would like to welcome the fact that our policy makers show growing general acceptance and understanding of the importance the forests and forest sector's potentials bear for the green economy. I am particularly pleased to note that this is increasingly becoming the case also in Slovakia. The contributions provided by the holistic concept of sustainable forest management through its three main pillars (environmental, economic and social) are particularly essential for discussing the connection between forests and Rio Plus 20 agenda as well as for exploring the ways and means to raise awareness about the increasing relevance of forests to the global development agenda.

At this point, Slovakia believes it is crucial to focus specifically on communicating and explaining how the full integration of forests into sustainable development agenda as well as the related support to environmentally sound investments into forestry can contribute to global economic growth, sustainable job creation, and poverty reduction. In doing so, Slovakia thinks that our main arguments should be based on those forest functions whose provisions contribute significantly and specifically to climate change mitigation and adaptation, the production of renewable material and energy, as well as production of a variety of environmental services.

There are many values and benefits from forests, beyond timber and non-wood forest products, which are still and often inadequately acknowledged by society and accounted for economically. There is a strong potential for recognizing the ecosystem values of forests more appropriately through their economic valuation. The ecosystem services provided by sustainably managed forests are essential for meeting the societal needs and for supporting a sustainable and low carbon economy. Internalizing these positive externalities from forests into prices will help us reflect properly on the true economic costs of sustainable forest management and, consequently, to raise awareness on multiple values of forests and integrate the total economic value of forests into policy making process.

In this regard, Slovakia believes that it would be conducive to our concerted efforts to utilize the outcomes of the recent study on “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity” as one of the means to advance forests profile in the Rio+20 Conference.

The public procurement policies for wood and wood products, which are under development and implementation in some Member States and regions (especially in Europe), are also one of the components of the policy framework which can foster transition of societies to a greener economy.

Forests and forest sector have a strong potential for contributing to a greener economy and a more sustainable society. However, the extent of real contributions will depend, among others, on recognition of forests role by politicians and adequate policies, as well as on the forest sector’s ability to improve efficiency of its production and to continue in developing innovative and better marketed products. Enhancing cooperation with other sectors remains essential element in this effort.

Thank you for your attention