

**Statement by Mr. George Okech, FAO Resident Representative on
Behalf of UNDP LECB/ UN-REDD Partner Agencies**

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Chrismar Hotel, Livingstone, Zambia

25-27th February 2014

Guest of Honour (to be confirmed)

The Director of Forestry, Mr. Ignatius Makumba

UNDP Country Director, Ms. Viola Morgan

Colleagues from the United Nations System

Senior Government Officials

The Academia

Members of the Media

Invited Guests and Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure and honour to address the official opening of this Regional African Workshop on REDD+ National Forest Monitoring Systems and Green House Gas (GHG) National Inventory Systems. I would like to warmly welcome you on behalf of the United Nations system, and in particular, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Allow me at the outset to thank the Government of Zambia for the leadership role in addressing issues of climate change and in hosting this important meeting for our region. It is gratifying to see the number of countries gathered here representing various sectors and constituencies. This unique platform provides an opportunity for us to share knowledge and experiences through South-to-South co-operation.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all the partners particularly colleagues working on the UNDP Low Emission Capacity Development Programme (UNDP-LECB) and the United Nations Joint Programme to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD), for deploying their joint efforts and substantive contributions in organizing this workshop. Through transformational and innovative programmes such as the UNDP LECB and UN-REDD, the United Nations is clearly demonstrating strong efforts and commitment to deliver development goals as “One UN”.

Dear participants; Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start off by putting our discussions this week in context. You all perhaps know, the profound words of Nicholas Stern which says that:

“Poverty and climate change are the two great challenges of the 21st century. Our responses to them will define our generation, and because they are linked to each other, if we fail on one, we will fail on the other.”

Undoubtedly, some of the impacts of climate change will be mostly felt in Africa. Whilst we have to contend with this challenge, the good news is that together we can do something about it. Together, we can make our forests play a crucial role in addressing this challenge and finding lasting responses and solutions to it.

Forests have some of the highest potential role in significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In line with this, REDD+ offers an opportunity for us in Africa to bring transformational and systemic change in the way we manage and protect our forests.

Dear participants; Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me now focus on **five key points** that calls for us to reflect and address in the development of National Forest Monitoring System and GHG Inventory Systems, for countries which aim to participate in a future international REDD+ mechanism.

First, REDD+ is not simply about measuring the carbon stored in forests. It is about livelihoods. It is about finding innovative ways to mobilize financing and investments to address key development challenges including poverty eradication, promoting green development pathways and sustainable development. This is particularly important in our dialogue within the context of RIO+20.

Second, countries working to improve their National Forest Monitoring Systems and GHG Inventory Systems based on their own national circumstances have commonalities as they have complexities. This means that there is a lot to draw from one another to ensure that the wealth of knowledge here is fully optimized and leveraged. This would therefore require open and constructive discussions in this meeting as well as open discussions amongst country teams represented here.

Dear participants; Ladies and Gentlemen

Third, there is the need to develop and implement effective multi sectoral approaches and stakeholder engagement processes, which brings different sectors and actors with various interests together. Notably, local communities, private sector, key Government Ministries and research institutions amongst others.

This is important as robust National Forest Monitoring Systems and GHG Inventory systems call for **enabling policy, regulatory and legal conditions** including institutional reforms. Coupled with this, we need a system that provides credible information to aid decision making on resource mobilization and allocation, policy adjustments and incentives to address the drivers of deforestation.

Fourth, we need to roll out systematic capacity building programmes which target the right persons and institutions to ensure that the systems that are designed are mainstreamed into national planning, development and budgetary processes to ensure future sustainability. We need to go beyond the organization of informative workshops of this nature to implement key actions emanating from the outcomes.

Finally, we need to ensure effective coordination and collaboration at the country level. Speaking about collaboration, it is noteworthy that, under the UN-REDD Programme, FAO and UNDP are supporting Zambia to develop a web portal that combines the National Forest Monitoring System with a REDD+ Wiki or Information System. This is innovative, novel and perhaps the first of its kind.

Dear participants; Ladies and Gentlemen

You have an interesting three day programme ahead of you. Regretfully, I cannot stay for the various sessions. I therefore conclude my remarks by wishing us all a constructive and successful meeting. I hope that our fruitful deliberations will generate new ideas and a renewed commitment to work together towards the common goal of advancing and charting a green and sustainable development pathway.

Let us work together to protect and conserve our forests for today and future generations. Let us foster co-operation, connections and collaboration that are lasting. Let us continue to strengthen the UNDP-LECB and UN-REDD partnership with our Government counterparts at the country level.

Thank you for your kind attention.