

**Opening Statement**  
**by Mr. Mamoru Ishihara**  
**Director-General, Forestry Agency of Japan**

International Expert Meeting on  
the Development and Implementation of  
National Codes of Practice for Forest Harvesting

17 November 2003  
Chiba, Japan

Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to extend a statement at the opening of this International Expert Meeting on the Development and Implementation of National Codes of Practice for Forest Harvesting – Issues and Options – on behalf of the Forestry Agency of Japan, one of the co-hosts of this meeting.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere welcome and appreciation to all participants who have made long journeys from all over the world to attend this meeting. It gives me a great pleasure to know that so many experts have gathered from a number of international organizations, governments, NGOs and industry. I believe that this reflects a strong interest of the international community in the promotion of sustainable forest management through appropriate harvesting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, various actions have been taken towards achieving sustainable forest management, such as by governments, international organizations, NGOs and industry. Despite such efforts, the rate of deforestation and degradation of forests does not seem to have declined at the global scale, and it continues to pose a major threat to the earth's ecosystems and to the human well-being into the future.

According to the recent assessment made by the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO), approximately 9 million hectares of forests decreased annually in the decade preceding year 2000. Among a multitude of social, economic and natural factors, inappropriate forest harvesting with the poor adoption of environmentally-friendly and sustainable practices is considered to have been boosting such a rapid deforestation and degradation of forests.

In addition, illegal logging and associated trade of timber have been growingly recognized as the impediments to sustainable forest management. For this reason, the international community is called upon to take urgent actions to tackle these issues at both national and international levels, which was reaffirmed in the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held last year in Johannesburg, which calls for “immediate action at the national and international levels to promote and facilitate the means to achieve sustainable timber harvesting”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Under such a global circumstance, Japan has been actively promoting its international cooperation for sustainable forest management world-wide, including bi-lateral cooperation such as through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and multi-lateral cooperation such as through International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Furthermore, the governments of Japan and Indonesia invited interested partners from a number of governments, international organizations and civil society to form the Asia Forest Partnership (AFP) which is a voluntary partnership initiative for the promotion of sustainable forest management in Asia. As you should have been informed already, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting for the Promotion of Asia Forest Partnership (AFP) will be held on 21 November, immediately after the conclusion of this meeting, and discuss concrete actions to be taken in the three major areas of interest, that is, combating illegal logging, prevention of forest fires and rehabilitation and reforestation of degraded lands.

In the Asia Forest Partnership (AFP), “Establishment and implementation of reduced impact logging and guidelines for controlling illegal logging” is listed as one of the proposed areas of cooperation. I believe that this meeting, which

starts today, will contribute to no small extent to the promotion of actions that were internationally agreed such as in WSSD and AFP. I strongly expect that all participants actively participate in the meeting discussions, exchange their experience, views and expertise, and produce fruitful outcomes to be brought back to your respective countries and organizations for the formulation of better policies and programs.

Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

In this meeting, you will exchange information on your respective efforts being made in your countries, regions and organizations with regard to codes of practice for forest harvesting. It is my sincere hope that Japan's experience would be shared with you to a great extent, and also that we could learn a lot from you.

Lastly, I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing again my warm welcome to everyone and my best wishes for your pleasant and fruitful stay in Japan.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.