



## WELCOME ADDRESS

of

*Aru Mathias*  
Forest Officer for the South Pacific sub-region

at the partner event

**“What has REDD+ done for us? No regrets benefits of REDD+ Readiness  
for the forest sector”**

at the

**25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Asia Pacific Forestry Commission  
3<sup>rd</sup> November 2013  
Rotorua, New Zealand**

**Distinguished Participants, Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning! It's a great pleasure for me to be here this morning and to welcome you on behalf of Mr. Hiroyuki Konuma, Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, to this partner event of the 25<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Forestry Commission; “What has REDD+ done for us? No regrets benefits of REDD+ Readiness for the forest sector.”

This side event is brought to you through a partnership of FAO and GIZ, with financial support from the UN-REDD Programme. The UN-REDD Programme was established in September 2008, as an innovative “One UN” partnership to provide coordinated technical and financial support for the development of national REDD+ programmes, utilizing the complementary resources of the three participating UN agencies: FAO, UNDP and UNEP. The Programme is

now supporting 49 partner countries, including 15 here in the Asia-Pacific region. It is one of two major multilateral initiatives supporting REDD+ Readiness, the other being the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank.

So, what has REDD+ done for us? And by ‘us’, we are talking about the forest sector in the widest sense. That is, not just foresters and forest departments, but all those with a stake in forests – civil society, private sector or public.

First of all, the REDD+ concept has greatly increased the recognition given by society to forests, and the importance given to forests for the potential role they can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But REDD+ as a mechanism is not yet operational. REDD+ is part of the ongoing international climate change negotiations and, as such, it will only be possible to implement REDD+ as part of a future comprehensive climate change agreement, which is still some years away.

So if implementation of REDD+ is not yet possible, why ask this question now? Well, for the simple reason that it is already being asked all over the region. Substantial sums of money have been committed, and spent, and it is reasonable to ask “What is the return on this investment?”

In order to answer properly, therefore, we must acknowledge first that all investments to date have been in REDD+ Readiness, not REDD+. This puts the question in a different perspective. The objective of REDD+ Readiness is not to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is not even to avoid a single hectare of deforestation. It is instead aimed at building capacity for the future, so that forest sectors in countries across this region can reduce forest-related emissions over the long term.

So what has REDD+ Readiness done for us? How has capacity been built? What have we learned about forest governance and legislation? Can we be confident that these gains and these lessons will be retained in years to come? And, given that the future of international climate change negotiations is still rather murky, what happens to these gains and these lessons if an international REDD+ mechanism never materializes?

These are the questions that are of direct relevance to us, gathered here for this APFC meeting under the banner “Forests for Prosperity”. Has REDD+ Readiness enhanced the role of the forest sector in the newly prosperous Asia Pacific region, and will it continue to do so? We have assembled a range of presentations to help us look critically at the return on our investments in REDD+ Readiness and I look forward to an interesting debate over the next few hours.

Before I close, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to our partners, GIZ in the Philippines and in the Pacific, for their substantive contributions to the event agenda, and for their positive collaborative work. Their contributions, and those of the diverse range of participants gathered here this morning, will surely help enrich the discussions and enhance the learning opportunities over the rest of the day.

Thank you.