



WFC2015
XIV World Forestry Congress

Forests and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future

7-11 SEPTEMBER 2015 Durban | South Africa

Durban Declaration

2050 vision for forests and forestry

Nearly 4000 participants from 138 countries met at the XIV World Forestry Congress on 7–11 September 2015 in Durban, South Africa – for the first time on the African continent – in a spirit of inclusiveness and with a willingness to learn from each other, share diverse points of view and gain new perspectives.

The Congress offers the following vision for forests and forestry as a contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and a sustainable future to 2050 and beyond:

- Forests are more than trees and are fundamental for food security and improved livelihoods. The forests of the future will increase the resilience of communities by: providing food, wood energy, shelter, fodder and fibre; generating income and employment to allow communities and societies to prosper; and harbouring biodiversity. They will support sustainable agriculture and human wellbeing by stabilizing soils and climate and regulating water flows.
- Integrated approaches to land use provide a way forward for improving policies and practices to: address the drivers of deforestation; address conflicts over land use; capitalize on the full range of economic, social and environmental benefits of integrating forests with agriculture; and maintain multiple forest services in the landscape context.
- Forests are an essential solution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Sustainably managed forests will increase the resilience of ecosystems and societies and optimize the role of forests and trees in absorbing and storing carbon while also providing other environmental services.

Realizing this vision will require new partnerships among the forest, agriculture, finance, energy, water and other sectors, and engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities. Success will require further investment in forest education; communication; capacity building; research, including climate change's impact on forest health and diseases; and the creation of jobs, especially for young people. Gender equality is fundamental, with women participating fully.

The enthusiasm of youth for creating a better world should become a constant source of inspiration and stimulus for innovation.¹ Their call for action should be supported through multi-stakeholder participation, engaging youth and attracting ever-larger numbers to the forest sector.

Upon the launch of the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2015, the Congress took stock of the state of the world's forests.

This Declaration reflects the diverse set of viewpoints of participants in the XIV World Forestry Congress. The actions recommended by Congress participants to implement the 2050 vision for forests and forestry are at www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/wfc2015/Documents/Key_messages_presentation.pdf. South Africa showcased the training of unemployed youth as forest firefighters as an example of the creative, cost-effective and life-affirming approaches by which this vision can be achieved, and which could serve as a beacon in facing the challenge of youth employment in Africa and beyond.

Participants gratefully acknowledged the hospitality of the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa, and the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

¹ The commitments made by youth at this Congress are at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/wfc2015/Documents/Key_messages_presentation.pdf.