



**Technical Meeting of the National Correspondents
to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010
on regional input in support of UNFF**
Rome, Italy
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Opening Remarks

by

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Mr Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Permanent Representatives to the FAO,
Dear participants, colleagues,

Good morning,

It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to FAO and to this Technical Meeting of the National Correspondents to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010. I am very pleased to see so many familiar faces, but above all to see so many new ones. I hope to be able to talk with many of you during the week ahead of us.

No doubt, all of us in this meeting have high expectations of the world's forests. For us forests are important for a number of reasons. They are to provide raw materials and energy, maintain biological diversity, mitigate

climate change, protect land and water resources, provide recreational facilities, improve air quality and help alleviate poverty.

At the same time, forests are affected by fire, air pollution, pest and invasive species – and are the primary targets in many countries for agricultural and urban expansion. Competing interests in the benefits offered by forest resources and forest lands are omnipresent and the need for a sound basis for analysis and conflict resolution has never been greater.

This requires on-going monitoring and assessment of trends that can measure progress in protecting, conserving and using forest resources in a wise and sustainable manner. FAO's Member Countries have entrusted the Forestry Department with the organization and promotion of this important task.

This year FAO celebrates the 60th anniversary of the publication of the results of its first Global Forest Resources Assessment – the Forest Resources of the World [hold up a copy]. This survey, which was started in 1946, was based on a questionnaire sent to all countries of which 101 responded, representing 66 percent of the world's forests.

As stated in the report, "a comprehensive inventory of the world's forests requires a truly international approach, entailing international acceptance of definitions as well as concerted and sustained efforts to encourage completion of adequate surveys of those forested areas for which reliable data are lacking." I think we can all subscribe to these words today, 60 years later.

The Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010 - or FRA 2010 as we call it - will be the most comprehensive and reliable assessment yet.

Most comprehensive because it will cover 235 countries and territories and will provide the basis for reporting on progress towards:

1. The Millennium Development Goals;
2. The Convention of Biological Diversity's target of achieving a *"significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level"* by 2010;
3. The Global Objectives on Forests of the Non-legally Binding Instrument on forests recently adopted by members of the United Nations Forum on Forests; and
4. The International Tropical Timber Organizations' Objective 2000.

It will also help countries report on land use and land use change for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

It will be the most reliable assessment ever, thanks to advances in technology and expanding global communications and to stronger support from countries and forest-related organizations. Within FAO, FRA 2010 will indeed be a cross-divisional and cross-departmental effort.

One of the innovative components of FRA 2010 is a new and ambitious global remote sensing survey which takes advantage of the latest technologies to provide better information on global forest change and the land uses that are replacing forests. You will hear more about this later today and on Thursday.

The support offered to FAO for FRA 2010 has been overwhelming.

175 countries have responded to our request to nominate a National Correspondent to FRA 2010. I am very pleased to note that most of you, the National Correspondents, are here today. We have more than 220 registered participants from 165 countries and over 10 major forest-related organizations. This provides the FRA process with very strong links to countries and their national efforts to assess and monitor their forests and other wooded land.

We are all very much aware that the requests for information keep increasing. FAO is making strong efforts to help harmonize forest-related reporting with other organizations to avoid duplication of efforts and to reduce the reporting burden on countries. You will hear more about these efforts later today and during the rest of the week. However, we are also fully aware that the task lying ahead for the National Correspondents is not an easy one and we very, very much appreciate the substantial efforts and contributions made by each and everyone of you.

We recently completed a joint meeting of two of the FAO Regional Forestry Commissions: the Near East Forestry Commission and the African Forest and Wildlife Commission. One of the conclusions of this meeting was the following, and I quote:

“The Commissions agreed to provide their national correspondents to FRA 2010 and their teams with the support they needed to prepare the country reports and to participate in the remote sensing survey and any special studies that may cover their countries.”

I am sure the National Correspondents from these two regions are pleased to learn this. I hope we will receive similar commitments from the Heads of Forestry at the meetings of the remaining Regional Forestry Commissions this

year. We, at FAO stand ready to provide any technical assistance needed to fulfil your important tasks.

I would also like to extend our gratitude to the large number of forest-related organizations who have helped shape FRA 2010 and who will either help FAO implement FRA 2010, provide complementary data through their own efforts or help further disseminate the knowledge generated through this process. In this respect, allow me to give recognition to the Expert Consultation held in Kotka, Finland in June 2006, to the many bilateral consultations and to the FRA Advisory group. The FRA process is a truly international partnership of individuals, countries and organizations. We express our gratitude to all of those participating in and contributing to this effort.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank for the extra-budgetary funding provided to help carry out FRA 2010. Special thanks go to Australia, Finland, NASA, EU, GEF, the German Aerospace Centre and ITTO. We hope that even more partners and donors will join this process.

Colleagues, you have a challenging programme in front of you this week and over the next couple of years. However, I am personally convinced that given the strong support and the excellent collaboration which is already evident, FRA 2010 will be the best assessment ever.

Before I hand the floor back to the Chair, I would like to formally invite you all to a small cocktail this evening at 6 p.m. in the Aventino Room on the 8th Floor of building B to celebrate the official launch of the FRA 2010 process.

Thank you.