



**Thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific,
Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 13)
of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

*FAO, Rome, Italy
18-21 February 2008*

Opening intervention

on behalf of

Jan Heino

**Assistant Director-General, Forestry Department
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Chair, Collaborative Partnership on Forests**

Mr Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

Let me start by presenting a few key figures to put in perspective the important role of forests for people and for the environment:

- 30 percent of the total land area is covered with forests, which contain a major part of terrestrial biodiversity.
- Forests provide habitats to about two-thirds of all species on earth.
- More than 1.6 billion people depend to varying degrees on forests for their livelihoods, for example for fuelwood, medicinal plants and forest foods.
- About 60 million indigenous people are almost entirely dependent on forests.
- In developing countries, about 1.2 billion poor people rely on forest resources for their livelihood, and 80 percent of the people depend on non-wood forest products, such as fruits and herbs, for their primary health and nutritional needs.

Forest biological diversity and other forest assets are seriously threatened, particularly in the tropical regions, as the global deforestation rate remains alarmingly high, at 13 million hectares per year. Forests face pressure from growing human populations and settlements, expansion of agriculture, poverty and unsustainable practices stemming from poor governance and law compliance. Therefore it is also alarming that the forestry sector, mainly from deforestation in the tropics, accounts for 17 percent of the global greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. You will hear more about the underlying causes of deforestation in CIFOR's presentation.

But not all news is bad. Specifically, a positive trend is the increasing attention to the biodiversity in many regions. The area of forest designated for the conservation of biological diversity increased by more than 96 million hectares between 1990 and 2005 and now accounts for about 11 percent of the world's forests. An additional nine percent are designated for protective functions, including soil and water conservation, desertification control and coastal protection. Moreover, the area of planted forests is increasing, now accounting for seven percent of global forest cover, accounting for half of global industrial roundwood supplies. While the majority of planted forest area is managed to obtain timber and other wood products, it is important to note that 24 percent is managed for protective purposes. An increasing supply from responsibly managed planted forests should alleviate pressure on natural forests, and thereby also contribute to maintaining and conserving forest biodiversity in natural forests.

Most of the figures cited above stem from the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2005, a joint effort of FAO, member countries and several members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests – the CPF. FRA 2010 will be an even more comprehensive effort, including a global remote sensing survey and better data on deforestation rates. FAO is taking steps to better coordinate information collection and dissemination, thus contributing to monitoring of the CBD 2010 forest-related targets, the UNFF Global Objectives on Forests, and the ITTO objectives related to sustainable management of tropical forests. Moreover, it seeks to improve the availability and quality of data related to forest carbon stocks in compliance with requirements under the UNFCCC.

Better information is also needed on forest genetic resources. These resources are valuable to society, from providing the basis to improved supplies of wood energy to their unexplored potential in medical research. FAO plans to undertake a collaborative process to evaluate the state of the world's forest genetic resources by 2013. We foresee the CBD secretariat and other CPF members as key collaborators in this exercise.

Mr Chair, as FAO was invited also to speak on behalf of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, I would like to express its members' sincere appreciation to countries and international fora for the extent to which they openly recognize CPF's contributions to implementing sustainable forest management worldwide. In this conjuncture we specifically wish to note the recognition by the Conference of Parties of CBD in 2006 of "the important role and achievements of the CPF in coordinating and collaborating on forest issues." Special thanks go to the CBD secretariat, as a founding member of CPF, for their active and committed contributions to the CPF work, especially as partner in the joint CPF initiatives on "Forest Science and Technology " and "Streamlining Reporting", which also contribute to the implementation of the CBD programme of work on forest biodiversity.

While they have notably different responsibilities, the 14 CPF members share a common aspiration to improve forest management and conservation and the livelihoods of forest-dependent people. Together with countries, CPF members work to reverse the loss of forest cover, increase sustainable management of forest resources, and to help meet other global forest-related objectives. I am pleased to share with you that last week the CPF members held a strategic dialogue on key global forest issues, ranging from forest finance to climate change, governance and scientific information. We explored ways to accelerate progress and new alliances among the members, seeking to address issues beyond the boundaries of a particular process. We underlined that the implementation must be strengthened considerably to meet these targets and objectives.

A list of biodiversity-related work by CPF members is far too long to summarize, so I would like to highlight just one recent product: the IUCN/ITTO Guidelines for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Tropical Timber Production Forests. They provide a practical tool to help meet the growing demand for forest products while conserving biodiversity.

In conclusion, Mr Chair, - forests, forestry and the broad concept of sustainable forest management are now more visible than ever before in the global political agenda. Just a few months ago, the UN General Assembly adopted the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests, agreed upon by UNFF; and the CoP of UNFCCC at Bali launched a two year comprehensive process for defining long-term cooperative action under the Convention, including consideration of policy approaches and positive incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD). Bioenergy is also a hot topic, given the increasing importance of woodfuels in all regions.

Mr Chair, distinguished delegates, we need to seize this moment to translate the increased political attention into real action on the ground, including the CBD programme of work on forest biodiversity. More than words, practical efforts are needed to help people manage, conserve and utilize the forest resources for their livelihoods.

Thank you.