



Element 1 of the Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change: Sustainable forest management provides an effective framework for forest-based mitigation and adaptation

**INTRODUCTION BY
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

“The environmental difficulties that confront us are not new, but only recently have we begun to understand their complexity ... The slowdown in the momentum of economic expansion and the stagnation in world trade ... challenged all nations’ ability to react and adjust”.

What I have just read to you is a quote, but it is not a quote from today. These words are from the Brundtland report “Our Common Future, published in 1987. We are indeed privileged to have with us today, as the guest of honour to this Session, Madam Brundtland. Given the current economic downturn which is affecting virtually all nations, the way in which the quote applies today is both eerie and worrying, as many countries, again, may find good reasons to delay any substantive action.

The environmental predicament we face has been common knowledge for a long time. The Brundtland report was followed in 1992 by the first Earth Summit, in which many of our global environmental problems, including climate change, were first acknowledged by the world community. It is also more than 40 years since discussions were initiated for an International Tropical Timber Agreement, in an early attempt to align the conservation and development of tropical forests. These and other landmarks show that we have long had an inkling that human actions were leading us towards an environmental crisis.

Nevertheless, the world community still dithers. The 2007 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicated that global emissions of major greenhouse gases increased by 70% between 1970 and 2004 and, to date, show no signs of abating.

In assessing the causes of global warming, the IPCC ranked forestry, land use and land use change in third place, behind only energy supply and industry. Deforestation is the sector's main culprit, and the main cause of deforestation, we know, is clearing for agriculture and other forms of development. We also know that rapidly growing forests can sequester carbon quickly. At the moment, the balance is negative: the IPCC estimated that deforestation, forest degradation and other changes in forests contribute about 17% of greenhouse gas emissions, mainly in tropical countries. But by reducing deforestation and increasing the area of rapidly growing forests, we can have a significant positive impact on climate change. So, we, the international forest community, have an important – perhaps a critical – role to play.

The leading international forestry institutions want to ensure that the role of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation is fully taken into

consideration in climate change negotiations. Therefore, a group of 14 of these institutions, including ITTO, coming together under the banner of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, have come together, surmounting the divisiveness that, according to at least one commentator¹, characterizes the international politics of forests, and they have produced a clear, unanimous position on the linkages between climate change and the forestry sector. This position has been published as *A Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change*, which was published during COP 14 in Poznam, Poland, and was also succinctly highlighted yesterday by Madam Jan MacAlpine, the Director of the UNFF.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Ian Heino, who has very successfully steered together the 14 International Organisations members of the CPF, to produce this important document.

Distingués délégués,
Mesdames et Messieurs,

The cornerstone of this position is sustainable forest management, which the forestry community generally shortens to SFM. Although deployed in a relatively small part of the global forest estate, SFM provides us with a flexible, robust, credible and well-tested framework for simultaneously reducing carbon emissions, sequestering carbon, and enhancing adaptation to climate change. The concept of SFM is broad enough to be deployed in timber production forests, protected area forests, and planted forests. It can help ensure the conservation of biodiversity, generate local income and employment, thereby alleviating poverty, and provide a long-term supply of a wide range of ecosystem services.

¹ Smouts, M-C (2003) *Tropical Forests, International Jungle: The Underside of Global Ecopolitics*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, United States.

SFM has not been adopted as widely as one would like due to a host of social, environmental, governance-related and technical challenges. CPF members have an intimate knowledge of these challenges and have been assisting their member countries in those fields. We have been making progress, and the increased attention and funding promised by climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives hold the prospect of greatly accelerated progress in the future.

In the short term, the most important forest-related climate change mitigation option is reduced deforestation and forest degradation, known as REDD. But many other options can be deployed under the umbrella of SFM, including forest conservation, forest restoration, afforestation, wood-based bioenergy production, and the use of sustainably produced wood products as substitutes for emissions-intensive materials.

The implementation of REDD will not necessarily mean a cessation of timber production. Research into reduced impact logging in natural tropical forests has established that better logging practice can lead to productivity gains at the same time as reducing environmental impacts. It was estimated recently that the potential for emissions reductions through improved forest management is at least 10% of that obtainable by curbing tropical deforestation.²

Wood that is produced through SFM can store carbon efficiently; its substitutes, such as cement, steel, aluminium and plastic, are net emitters of carbon. Capturing carbon and storing it in long-term wood products such as house frames, therefore, is a good way to combat climate change.

² Putz FE, Zuidema PA, Pinard MA, Boot RGA, Sayer JA, et al. (2008) Improved tropical forest management for carbon retention. *PLoS Biol* 6(7):e166. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.0060166

Energy production, the number-one greenhouse gas emitter, offers another opportunity. The use of woodfuels as a substitute for fossil fuels is gaining considerable attention worldwide. Compared to other renewables sources of energy such as solar, hydro and wind, wood-based bioenergy plantations require relatively little capital and technical development and could be an especially efficient land use on abandoned agricultural land. Tropical countries have a comparative advantage in this field because of the high growth rates that can be achieved. Just as in natural forests, however, plantation forest production must be underpinned by SFM. This means, among other things, that the best species need to be identified and developed, appropriate production technologies need to be applied, and all environmental and social concerns need to be acknowledged, assessed and addressed.

Even in semi-arid forests, which have relatively low carbon values, the introduction of SFM will make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation.

SFM is also important for adapting to climate change. Climate change poses serious challenges for many forests and the people who depend upon them for their livelihoods and the ecosystem services they provide. The deployment of SFM, which, by its nature, is adaptive in the face of changing environmental conditions, will help both forests and forest-dependent communities meet these challenges.

SFM, therefore, should be at the heart of the post-2012 climate change mitigation and adaptation regime. It should be at the forefront of negotiations at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held later this year in Copenhagen. Negotiators should focus on ways of encouraging SFM, and

this means making incentives available that will make SFM an attractive land use.

For their part, forest agencies can ensure that climate change mitigation is integrated into national SFM strategies. If SFM is to become as widespread as we would wish, much capacity building will be needed. A coordinated approach at the national level is required, and international agencies, such as the members of the CPF, should support such approaches, both financially and technically. Governance in the forest sector also needs to be addressed, most importantly to ensure that indigenous communities and other land owners and users can participate in decisions over forest management and share in the benefits of SFM.

With a post-Kyoto Agreement in the offing, and the commitment of the international community to take action, we could be entering an exciting new phase in the deployment of SFM. It is imperative that we, the forestry community, are fully engaged in the debate. We can lead by example, by showing our full commitment to the principles of SFM and to putting them into action.