



Balgis Osman-Elasha
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"We should act now to curb climate change. We can do it if science, governments, businesses and communities come together and address this pressing issue."

Read the full interview with **Balgis Osman-Elasha, Nobel Peace Prize laureate together with the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#)** who will be a keynote speaker on "Producing for development" at the XIII World Forestry Congress in Argentina.

[\[watch: video 1\]](#)

[\[watch: video 2\]](#)

Karthoum – Rome, FAO headquarters - Sustainable forest management is defined as a system of forestry practices intended to maintain and enhance the economic, social and environmental values of all types of forest, including those in such conflict-stricken areas as the Sudan. A leading author with the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#) and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007, **Balgis Osman-Elasha** maintains that in the Sudan adaptation is vital, in view of the strong linkages between climate change and conflict in the country. Given her groundwork and efforts to educate Sudanese university students, thus raising awareness among the upcoming generation, **Balgis Osman-Elasha** will be a keynote speaker on "Producing for development" at the XIII World Forestry Congress in Argentina.

Q. What is the role played by the forest sector in environmental rehabilitation and management? [\[watch: video 1\]](#)

A. Forest ecosystems provide a wide range of support, supply, regulatory and cultural services ("ecosystem services"). Climate change could lead to significant changes in the supply of such services, particularly if coupled with population growth, urbanization, deforestation, forest fragmentation and other forms of habitat loss. This is why it is important to have a clear understanding of the impact of climate change and other types of stress on forests resources in the various regions of the world and to explore the adaptation measures needed to address these impacts.

Sustainable forest management and optimum utilization of forest products can play a major role in improving the adaptation of social and ecological systems to climate change. In the context of climate change, the principles of sustainable forest management can be applied in order to reduce the exposure and sensitivity of forests and therefore their vulnerability, and/or to enhance their adaptive capacity.

Q. What role does the education of students and rural communities (particularly farmers) play in climate change adaptation and responsiveness? [\[watch: video 1\]](#)

A. Educating people and raising their awareness regarding the potential impacts of climate change on forests is the first step in building a common understanding of the emerging challenges facing forest ecosystems, and involving them in responding to these impacts. People can play an active role in adapting to climate change through their traditional knowledge and skills, but such knowledge and skills must be tapped and built upon to ensure sustainable solutions. With a view to adaptation, it is very important to work at community level and to encourage people to participate in activities aiming at forest conservation and maintenance. One of the main objectives of forestry extension work should be to achieve a climate-resilient community that is aware of environmental threats and the need to manage their forest resources in a sustainable manner.

Q. How can the forest sector contribute to addressing the question of the Sudan's being turned into a desert because of escalating climate problems? Can it help to respond to concerns about the connection between climate change and conflict? [\[watch: video 2\]](#)

A. In many parts of the Sudan, forests represent a source of livelihoods, water and energy. Deforestation and the resulting desertification have jeopardized these livelihoods as well as some key economic sectors. Desertification is currently seen as one of the major environmental problems in the country. Climate change and its potential impacts on agricultural productivity and food security could place increasing pressure on declining forest resources through the expansion of agriculture to compensate for low productivity, coupled with reliance on the sale of timber and non-wood forest products to generate income. In addition to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, forest conservation can play a crucial role in efforts to improve the adaptive capacity of local people and alleviate poverty.

Regarding the connection between climate change and conflict, although we are aware that most of the current conflicts in Africa are linked to resources, climate change is certainly not the only factor leading to conflict: there are many other factors that interact at various levels from local to international and can fuel these conflicts and aggravate their impacts. All these factors need to be addressed if we are to solve the conflict problem and obtain lasting peace. An important dimension is natural resources conservation and management, and here I focus on forests because the planting of trees and forests will enable us to maintain soil fertility, increase agricultural productivity, provide fodder and water for livestock, and generally improve the community's livelihood.

As Principal Investigator with the [Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources \(HCENR\)](#) based in Khartoum, **Balgis Osman-Elasha** focuses her work on sustainable development and has special expertise in vulnerability and adaptation assessment. **Balgis Osman-Elasha** is also at the forefront of global research on climate change. A leading author of the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#) reports, she has produced groundbreaking work on global warming, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. **Osman-Elasha** holds a PhD in forestry science, a master's degree in environmental science and a BSc with honours in forestry and agricultural science.