



“The planet never needed more than now world forestry management”

World Forestry Congress produces a message to be presented at COP 15 in Copenhagen



Above: Jan Heino, Assistant Director General of the Forestry Department, FAO

Buenos Aires, Argentina - “We should not exclude any potential means of mitigating climate change” said Jan Heino, Assistant Director General of the Forestry Department at FAO, just as the World Forestry Congress drew to a close on Friday 23 October. In as little as five days, a major exercise of discussion, partnership and knowledge sharing occurred, seeing the involvement of the private sector as well as of civil society, the academia, NGOs and international organizations. With an initial expected number of 4 000 participants rising up to over 7 000, the meeting in Buenos Aires was evidence of the momentum generated by this crucial juncture.

Key note speakers on the panel spelled out that climate change is happening here and now, that several countries have already been badly affected by it and, that as the clock to Copenhagen keeps ticking, cooperation across different sectors is crucial to turn climate change into an opportunity, one fostering a green solution to the financial crisis which struck in the last few years.

“The woods are the cradle of human beings. The earth is our shared home. Protecting forests is protecting our shared home” said Mr Zhibang, China’s Minister for Forestry at the Opening Ceremony on Sunday 18 October. “Human beings have woken up in light of the serious ecological crisis”, he added, further urging all key players around the table to take up an involved, committed, responsible role.

Mr Zhibang's remarks were echoed during the Closing Ceremony by representatives of India and South Africa, as both countries were invited on the podium by Mr Heino in order to voice their expression of interest in holding the XIV World Forestry Congress, six years from now.

Dawning of a new forestry management

With preparations for the Congress starting at the most difficult financial and economic time, FAO proposed involving the private sector by devoting two special events to it - a roundtable session of face to face meetings with business down the table, and a roundtable on investment and financing. "FAO's past experience of similar congresses showed that there is too little participation of the private sector, which was found to be unfortunate as they are a very important stakeholder in the development and sustainability of the forest sector" said Jukka Tissari, FAO, who chaired the special event on investment and financing.

"We are at the dawn of a new era for forestry" remarked Tim Rollinson, Director General of the UK Forestry Commission, chair of the Forum on Forests and Climate Change. Tim Rollinson also attended the Congress in another capacity, as presenter of the work of the Prince of Wales' Rainforests Project (PRP), on behalf of Justin Mundy, Director of the PRP. In fact, the Prince of Wales even sent a video-message of encouragement to the participants and to the forestry community at large, soliciting decisive action.

In the family tree of forestry collaboration, FAO celebrated the 60th anniversary of its joint cooperation with IUFRO, with Don Koo Lee, President of IUFRO and Mr Heino being invited to the podium by Olman Serrano, the Associate Secretary General of the Congress, for an informal moment of recollection and symbolic renewal of successful collaboration.

Message to COP 15 calling for silver lining

"For the first time, the Congress proceedings will be published to make available the wealth of contributions presented, thus extending the message of the Congress beyond its actual duration", said Leopoldo Montes, Secretary General of the XIII WFC.

With only two months remaining until the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, one of the key outcomes of the WFC has been the concrete opportunity to generate public support towards low-carbon and resource-efficient economies. In addition to this, the WFC has produced a message which will be presented at COP 15 in Copenhagen.

Calling for the ability to craft a concerted action, a so called silver lining in response to climate change, the substance of the message stemmed from the five day discussions and beckons all partners to join forces – from governments to civil society to the private sector, academia and individuals.

Receiving huge coverage from the international press, the Congress has had moments of great emotional participation, to give but one example, when Jane Goodall, the world's foremost authority on chimpanzees, held her speech in front of an audience of over 2 000 or, as indigenus leader Euclided Macuxi Pereira, invited as key note speaker at the Opening Ceremony, stressed the value and crucial importance of restoring harmony with nature, abandoning a logic of consumption of human resources which would lead to the destruction of our planet.