

Talking points for

David Nabarro, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Food Security and Nutrition

International Conference on Forests for Food Security and Nutrition

Monday, 13 May 2013

FAO Rome

Chair of the Indigenous People's Forum, Mirna Cunningham;

Minister for Water and Forests in Gabon, Gabriel Tchango;

Executive Secretary of the Commission on Biodiversity, Bráulio de Sousa Dias;

Head of the Federal Forestry Agency in Russia, Vladimir Lebedev,

Director General of FAO – and Vice-Chair of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Task Force on Global Food Security - Jose Graziano da Silva,

Eduardo Rojas, Assistant Director General

Excellences, Colleagues ...GOOD MORNING AND WELCOME

I have been eagerly awaiting this important conference. I am here as Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Food Security and Nutrition. I am delighted to see the importance being accorded to the role of forests. For many years, they have been taken for granted, to the detriment of current and future generations.

This conference will contribute to a greater appreciation of the role that forests play in household livelihoods, people's food security and nutrition, and as a source of local and global public goods. These include serving as sources of food, fuel and water, as reservoirs of biodiversity and as the basis of many ecosystem services – they are, for example, the world's primary means for carbon capture.

I anticipate that your work over these three days will lead to a shared appreciation of the real challenges to transform this appreciation into both political accountability and concrete action. Presentations and discussions in the parallel sessions today and tomorrow should show the potential impact of concerted action by multiple stakeholders from the whole of society. The final day will establish some principles and frameworks which can contribute to synergized and effective efforts: it will be critical that participants focus on the follow up needed for transformation to happen.

I would like to underline the risks posed to food and nutrition security by climate change – and the critical role that forests play in mitigating its impact on food systems. Agriculture and deforestation contribute heavily to carbon dioxide emissions, jeopardizing our long-term ability to produce sufficient

food. Finding ways to protect – and expand - forests so that they capture as much of this carbon as possible, to reduce agricultural carbon emissions and to meet the growing demand for an increasing diversity of foods, is one of the greatest challenges we face today.

A focus on forests reminds us clearly why we need a comprehensive approach to food security and nutrition. This has been promoted by the UN Secretary-General through his High Level Task Force on Global Food Security. Governments that are serious about sustainable development recognize that any decision that has a bearing on the scale, intensity and pattern of forests, as well as their maintenance, involves careful choices and delicate trade-offs. This may include focusing on the needs not just of local communities who live in, or depend on, forests for food, nutrition and livelihoods. The overall contribution of forests to sustainability is so much greater – particularly in relation to climate and carbon capture. At the same time, there may be a strong case for using forested land to meet human needs for food, shelter and fuel. The needs of today versus the long-term well-being of our planet: tough political choices, anywhere.

Let me demonstrate my understanding of the importance of forests in multiple areas of strategy relating to food security and nutrition. The the Zero Hunger Challenge – the vision launched by the Secretary-General at Rio+20. The underlying principles are realization of the right to food through collective understanding, organization and activism, with a strong focus on the elimination of inequity, particularly between women and men. There are five elements to the challenge: here they are....

First, 100% access to adequate food all year round: this means protecting forests as an integral source of food for the hundreds of millions of people who rely upon them.

Second, zero stunted children: this will require that we value the nutritionally-dense indigenous foods, many of which grow in forests.

Third, ensuring that all food systems are sustainable: this demands careful management and protection of forests and landscapes. It means acknowledging the ecosystem foundation of all agriculture and seeking ways to minimize its ecological footprint. It means recognizing that forests are the primary repository of the genetic material important for agriculture.

Fourth, doubling the productivity and incomes of smallholders – this will be boosted by encouraging farmers to diversify with trees on farms and agroforestry systems and to establish small-scale forest-based enterprises for generating additional income

Fifth, we seek to eliminate – as far as possible – loss and waste of food. This is vital if we are to make the best use of existing land, water, soil and other inputs, one third of all produced food is currently discarded somewhere between harvest and your home. More efficient and sustainable land use and food production would reduce the need to cut down forests for new agricultural land.

With so many interests at stake in forest management, I would like to focus on one of the most fundamental lessons we have learned right here in Rome, through the Committee on World Food Security. This is the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to food security and involving all of

the actors in a meaningful discussion of the issues at stake. The CFS is considered one of the most innovative governance structures in the UN system – and I am pleased that like the CFS, this international conference includes representation from governments, civil society, the private sector and – most especially – the communities which rely on forests. I hope that the CFS will have an opportunity to review the outcomes of this conference and consider their implications for its future work.

Last month I was in Dublin at a meeting titled “Hunger, Nutrition and Climate Justice.” It was an extraordinary event, with the broadest range of grassroots groups and policy makers in a true dialogue. I was particularly struck by two key concepts.

First, applying the notion of justice, equity and realization of human rights to conversations on food security and climate change helps immensely to clarify our choices when it comes to complex issues such as these. The application of these notions in conversations about forests is would be equally important as in many countries local people do not have adequate access to forest resources even though they depend on them for their livelihoods. I know you will be discussing issues of access – and means to ensure that people are entitled to access forests when they are common property – during the conference.

Second, we cannot allow ourselves to overlook gender in our analysis of the challenges and opportunities. Women’s voices must be heard when we debate the future of forests and food security.

I trust that you will bear these in mind as your discussions continue in the coming days. I wish the conference every success.