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plant, manage
and protect forests for people



INTERNATIONAL YEAR
OF FORESTS - 2011

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KEY MESSAGES

2011 has been designated by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Year of Forests.

The theme of the year, 'Forests for People', conveys that forests are essential to over 1.6 billion people who depend on them for their livelihoods.

Humanity depends on forests and trees and half of our population now lives in cities.

Every single person can make a difference in keeping our world rich in forests and trees. Cities need trees to clean the air, shade us in the heat, block the cold wind and give us spiritual energy. Help build a green vision for our cities.

"Forests and Trees for Healthy Cities: Environment and Livelihood for All"
"Trees Connecting People: In Action Together"

International Year of Forests: Celebrating Forests and People Dedicates October 2011 to Urban and Periurban Forestry

Welcome Remarks

**by Michael Martin, Director, Forest Policy Division
on behalf of Eduardo Rojas-Briales, ADG Forestry Department of FAO**

World Habitat Day: "Climate Change and Cities"
FAO Seminar, Rome, 3rd October 2011

[Communication material: Screen (IYF & UPF); Press Release; Brochure; Poster]

Welcome Remarks

Michael Martin, Director, Forest Policy Division

on behalf of Eduardo Rojas-Briales, ADG Forestry Department of FAO

Good morning friends,

I listen and learn with interest from the speaker's before me of the challenging work undertaken by many of you to address the impacts of climate change on cities. UN-Habitat reminds us that a majority of the world's population now lives in cities. We know equally well that most of the material needs of cities are met from the peri-urban and rural settings. In many countries, the demographic transition from a rural population to an urban population is seldom smooth and often results in blight and a lack of services. Natural spaces in urban settings sometimes suffer and trees in public commons are denuded.

Our experience tells us that people and trees go together and cities without trees are missing an element of their soul. Today, it is my honor to convey greetings and best wishes of the Assistant-Director-General of the FAO Forestry Department, Eduardo Rojas-Briales and report that within the context of the International Year of Forests, October has been dedicated to urban and peri-urban forestry as a tribute to all people both urban and rural who depend on forests and trees for food, shelter and environmental protection. The decision to dedicate the month of October to urban forestry, in line with the World Habitat Day celebrated today is purposeful. The benefit of urban forests is high on the global forest policy agenda at the United Nations Agencies. For instance, benefits of forests and trees to urban communities will be discussed at the tenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in Istanbul in April 2013. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is putting in place a global Initiative on Cities and Biodiversity. The previous presentations bear witness to some of FAO's actions focusing on food security and poverty alleviation.

BENEFITS OF UPF

Allow me to recall some benefits of forests and trees for cities. A forested city which grows in harmony with its ecosystem becomes a resilient city in term of mitigation and adaptation to climate changes. An urban watershed with adequate tree cover helps prevent landslides and floods; the 2nd World Landslide Forum that opened this morning and will highlight this issue.

Trees mitigate the impact of strong winds, and reduce damage to road and building infrastructure. Trees slow the wind and provide shade reducing costs of air conditioning and heating. Wood residues are widely used as alternative energy (wood energy) for heating and local electricity production. The decreased “heat island effect” prevents detrimental impact on wellbeing, health and death of very vulnerable people. Scientific studies have demonstrated these positive values. You can probably name many more – consider the importance of trees in our public parks and along waterways. They are cool and they are uplifting.

Economically, public and private enterprises generate green jobs and income through multi-usage management and maintenance of woodlands and trees. Farming and landscape systems that incorporate agroforestry and high-yielding plantations can supply nearby markets at competitive prices. Integrating green (“soft”) and grey (“hard”) infrastructure is not only more pleasing but are frankly more resistant, have a longer life and are less costly than concrete and pavement alone. In addition, the esthetic value of a green city is highly appreciated and has an impact on community building, mental and physical health, land and property values, and attracts businesses. Extensive research and experience demonstrates that towns which have taken steps to invest in a green vision have subsequently enjoyed many benefits.

CHALLENGES

Climate Change is a common denominator at global level and the growing number of alliances of cities and governments is indispensable to face the challenge. However, at local level, a common denominator of too many cities in the world is the lack or the degradation of forest and tree cover. On one side, it is acknowledged that there is a general lack of awareness of those benefits and of the good practices to implement urban forestry; urban forestry is overlooked in statistics, reports, programmes and strategic decisions. On another side, we have to recognize that when people wage a daily struggle against hunger and malnutrition, and have to contend with natural disasters such as floods and landslides, forestry related concerns often rank low on the agenda. However, coherent investment by governments and communities in the protection and restoration of suitable forest and tree cover in and around cities, coupled

with good governance policies, can make a real contribution to reducing poverty and malnutrition in an environment that is healthy for all.

FAO ASSISTING MEMBER COUNTRIES

FAO member countries are increasingly requesting FAO for assistance in this area. For instance, together with governments, local authorities and citizens, we are

- building strategies and action plans for cities (such as the cases in Africa for the urban watershed management of Brazzaville, productive landscape management of four cities of Niger, and woodfuel supply and demand of N'Djamena, Chad); and,
- promoting worldwide diffusion of knowledge (e.g. from Centers of Excellence – the Chinese Academy of Forests, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, Aravali Foundation in India, and the European Forum on Urban Forestry).
- Currently, FAO is leading a participatory process for the development of Guidelines for policy and decision making that will promote best practice in urban and peri-urban forestry. The publication “Towards Urban and Periurban forestry Guidelines” will be disseminated at the end of this International Year of Forests.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, promoting a green environment for cities is seen as a key element of their strategy for achieving the Millennium Goals and we see more institutions seizing this opportunity as a solid way to tackle the challenges of climate change.

In targeting the land surrounding the main cities and those in the process of becoming major urban centers, we are touching the future of more than half the populations of our countries. It is also fundamental that the green vision for cities be developed in tune with the needs and interests of the rural communities surrounding them. It is only by combining forces and pooling the expertise that we can give coherent and lasting support to the harmonious and equitable development of the cities of today and tomorrow. This applies to small, medium, big and mega cities both to plan for the future and cure today's ills.

FINAL MESSAGE

Governments, local authorities, foresters and individuals must press for greater dialogue aimed at collective and responsible investment, with the major challenge of reconciling three elements that are inextricably linked: the community, trees and well-being.

On behalf of the FAO Assistant Director General of Forestry department and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, I invite all citizens to “Build a Common Vision for a Healthy Cities for All”. Forest and trees connect people. The international year of forest calls for action together.

THANK YOU

I thank you very much and invite you to listen to the messages delivered by the next two keynote speakers.

END OF KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Slogans:

Press Release 3rd Oct. 2011: Global forestry institutions call for a more integrated management of Urban and Peri-Urban trees and forests

“Forests and Trees for Healthy Cities: Environment and Livelihood for All”

“Trees Connecting People: In Action Together”