

**XIII World Forestry Congress 2009**  
**Buenos Aires, Argentina**  
***Forest Development: A Vital Balance***  
**Findings and Strategic Actions**

**PREAMBLE**

We, the 7,075 participants from 160 countries gathered at the Thirteenth World Forestry Congress to consider the theme of the Congress, “Forest Development: A Vital Balance” and through it explore the numerous existing and emerging environmental, social and economic challenges facing us . For the first time the Congress incorporated discussion fora, business meetings and a session on communication.

Forests are an invaluable asset for humanity providing livelihoods for billions of people, helping achieve environmental sustainability, and serving as a source of social and spiritual values for peoples, communities and nations. Through their sustainable management, forests can contribute to alleviating poverty, safeguarding biodiversity, providing the broad range of goods and services for present and future generations, in the context of a changing climate.

While we know that sustainable forest management alone is not enough to address the multitude of challenges we are convinced that sustainable forest management contributes to achieving the vital balance between man and nature that is needed for sustainable development. We acknowledge that international conventions and other United Nations instruments, such as the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests, provide useful institutional frameworks for action.

By sharing with the global community our findings and strategic actions from this Thirteenth World Forestry Congress, we invite others to join with us to form the broadest possible coalition and coordinate on planning and implementing strategic actions.

**FINDINGS**

For too long, the discussion of forest issues has been limited to people within the forest sector. Although this has resulted in substantial improvements, including forest productivity, health, and diversity, it is now time for a more inclusive approach to address the challenges that lie ahead. Today, the **major pressures on forests are arising from outside the forest sector**, such as changes in global climates, economic conditions, and population. These changes are creating **impacts across multiple sectors. For example**, population growth and migration to cities is creating environmental pressures on forests and farm lands. These changes are occurring more rapidly than they did in the past, creating **more uncertainty and larger fluctuations** - global economic changes and fuel demands and supplies are examples. **The path forward** lies in shifting to an **integrated landscape approach** for confronting these changes, working with partners outside the forest sector to develop sustainable **multi-sector responses**. The accelerating rate and the dimension of changes in economic, social, and environmental conditions require **immediate action**. In addition, Regional Organizations and Initiatives are important emerging instruments that complement international and national approaches to SFM

Strategic actions:

- Initiate integrated cross-sectoral actions at global, regional, national, and local scales on key issues, including climate change, bio-energy, water, biodiversity, food security and poverty alleviation to reduce adverse impacts on forests.
- Implement mechanisms for cross-sectoral monitoring and reporting to influence policies and actions related to forestry.

People around the world hold a wide **variety of opinions and perceptions** about the importance of forests and the values they provide to them individually, to their community, and to their country. As cities grow, urban-dwellers are becoming less aware of the **vital goods and services** provided by forests. The growing population and general desire to increase the standard of living and quality of life **generates unprecedented pressure on a finite base of land, water and other essential natural resources and on indigenous peoples and forest dependent communities**. A better understanding of the impact of this pressure could lead to **changes in behaviour** within the population that **reduce impacts** on forests and communities.

Strategic actions:

- Create innovative mechanisms that incorporate local and indigenous knowledge as a source of valid information to enrich global knowledge and the understanding of sustainable forest management.
- Strengthen interfaces between forest knowledge and society; focusing in particular on opinion leaders in local populations, as a way to influence policy makers.

The broader perspective that forests produce services of **economic and environmental value** to society, such as clean water, biodiversity and carbon sequestration, has not been fully recognized and realized to date. At this Congress, the values of these services to both rural and urban people emerged as vital to society. **Economic mechanisms** were proposed to take full account of these values which, if successfully implemented, would create financial incentives for land owners and managers thereby reducing **deforestation pressures** and **illegal and unsustainable activities**. Given the unprecedented pressure on forests, development of these mechanisms and associated global investment is an urgent priority and will have very significant and rapid benefits for forests, but in doing so, care is needed not to impinge on the traditional uses by indigenous communities.

Strategic actions:

- Foster the development of mechanisms at local regional, national and global levels for realizing new economic values of forests that create financial incentives for landowners and communities to manage for these values.
- Focus immediately on climate change related mechanisms as the first priority with particular attention to REDD issues.
- Increase efforts to develop integrated policies and strategies for effective management of forest and water resources.

With a **growing global population** and demand for natural resources, **planted forests will become an increasingly important** part of the landscape along with cities and towns, agricultural lands, and natural forests. These planted forests provide the **opportunity to produce more goods and services from less land** as well as effectively contribute to climate change mitigation, degraded land restoration and other environmental benefits. Development

and management of these forests will need to be done within a sustainability framework that allows consideration of potential risks, such as pressure on other land uses and effects on water, and biodiversity, along with the expected benefits. Finding the appropriate balance among all land uses will require a more integrated consideration of the services and values that each provides from the environmental, social, and economic standpoint.

Strategic actions:

- Recognize the importance of planted forests in meeting economic, social and environmental needs.
- Focus activities on degraded landscapes, especially restoration of degraded forest lands.
- Develop and implement technologies to maintain and enhance the productivity of planted forests and their contributions at local and landscape levels.

Sustainable development requires **sustainable energy supplies**. Forests are an important part of the solution. **Bioenergy** has two dimensions: **home heating and cooking; and commercial energy production**. Well-managed forests, both native and planted, will be vital as a sustainable supply of biomass for home use. Forest biomass is increasingly seen as an **alternative feedstock to fossil fuels** for commercial energy production. This is a global **opportunity**, but with significant **risks** such as increased deforestation, competition with other wood products, and pressures to shift land uses away from food production. Good **governance practices** are needed to enable interested parties to participate in decisions on the appropriate **balance of forest uses** to serve local, regional, and national needs, and more broadly, on the roles of **forests in landscapes** with agricultural and other land uses.

Strategic actions:

- Develop energy forests within the context of a sustainability framework to minimize the risk of unintended consequences across the forest, agriculture and energy sectors.
- Implement good governance policies for sustainable bioenergy development.
- Develop and improve technologies for more efficient production and diverse use of biomass for energy including second generation technologies.

Forests are already showing evidence of climate change. Patterns of **disturbance** have shifted: larger wildfires and insect and disease outbreaks; more widespread wind and storm damage; worse droughts in some areas; and shifting ranges of some tree species. Climate change is one of the **highest priority** issues facing us today. Foresters can do more to improve the **resilience of forests** to the adverse impacts of climate changes while at the same time helping to sequester and store carbon being emitted into the atmosphere. These steps would contribute positively to the **global carbon balance**, reduce pressures on deforestation and degradation and also support the global economy. Beyond the forest, sustainably harvested forest products and wood fuels can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by substituting high emission materials for neutral or low-emission, renewable ones.

A two-pronged approach is needed that focuses simultaneously on increasing the **mitigation** of carbon emissions and practicing **adaptive management** to guide the transition in forests ecosystems and communities to conditions more sustainable into the future.

A group of Congress delegates prepared a technical message to COP-15 of the UNFCCC which addressed the major linkages and their concerns about forests, forestry and climate change.

Strategic actions:

- Develop new approaches to enhancing carbon sequestration using forests and new options for managing forests in the face of climate changes and implement them widely.
- Provide informed and scientifically proved inputs to climate change negotiations.
- Simplify AR CDM rules and implementation of REDD+.
- Advocate that local needs currently met from forests are respected and reflected in international climate change-oriented mechanisms and policies.
- Expand research on adaptation to climate change and its impacts on ecosystems, economies and societies.

Fragile ecosystems, including arid zones, small islands, wetlands and mountains, play a significant role in biodiversity conservation, harboring unique and endemic species that are particularly adapted to **extreme** ecological conditions. Their species richness provides essential goods and services for people's livelihoods and well-being. Their fragile nature means they are particularly **sensitive** to global changes, and in most cases are already **degraded** due to increasing human pressures.

Strategic actions:

- Promote protection and restoration of fragile ecosystems to improve their resilience and adaptation to changing climates and human impacts and to maintain their vital environmental services, including food security and livelihoods for their inhabitants.
- Increase efforts to combat desertification through forestry related actions.

After many years of lack of support this Congress recognized a thriving forest industry sector as important due to the economic and social **benefits** it provides and its potential in the area of clean technologies. Creating enabling policy environments that promote investment in clean technologies and the necessary infrastructure for **efficient and environmentally** responsible wood harvesting and processing are essential to achieve **sustainable development** goals. While in some countries the forest industry has made **progress** in addressing environmental and social issues, many others do not have explicit policies and mechanisms fostering development of a thriving forest industry.

Strategic actions:

- Create an enabling environment of policy and legal framework for the forest industry sector.
- Expand research to develop new clean technologies and forest products.

**Forest-related policies need to be adapted** to the challenges of **rapid global changes**. Social and economic changes are as important to **sustainable development** as the environmental changes already under way. **Good governance** within and beyond the forest sector is an imperative to improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent populations, reducing illegal logging, deforestation and forest degradation. This also implies providing **secure tenure** to communities and other local stakeholders who use and manage forest resources. Public

sector **forestry institutions need to become facilitators** rather than exercising command and control. **New and innovative instruments for financing sustainable forest management** that increase access to capital markets, value environmental services and mitigate risks can support emerging forest policies.

Strategic actions:

- Improve governance at all levels of the forest sector, including building capacity of forestry institutions to enforce laws and regulations, and facilitate sustainable forest management by state and non-state actors.
- Provide better mechanisms to recognize and value women's roles in both informal and formal domains.
- Improve worker skills and working conditions needed for safe and productive work in the expanding forest sector.
- Promote land tenure reform providing secure rights to communities and local stakeholders to use and manage forest resources.
- Develop financing strategies within the framework of national forest programmes using innovative instruments for investment and market development in forestry.

## **CLOSING**

Through these 9 findings and 27 strategic actions, we believe that the vital balance between forests and development can be improved. Our hope is that when the next Congress convenes in 6 years, signs of progress towards this vital balance are evident around the world and humanity continues to benefit in many ways from forests.

The delegates gratefully acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the Government of Argentina, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Congress Organizing Committee and collaborating institutions, in creating the setting in which these exceptionally innovative, inspirational, and fruitful discussions were held on the future of the world's forests.

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