Congress Considerations

As the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations approaches its 100th anniversary, the importance of the world's forests and trees to humankind is dramatically increasing. Forests are essential to the economic, social and environmental well-being of all citizens of the world. Forests and trees contribute to the conserving of soil and water resources; to an essential supporting role for agriculture; to ameliorating local and global climates; to providing carbon sinks important to intervention strategies in global climate change; to enhancing urban and rural aesthetics; to serving recreational and spiritual requirements; to meeting food, fuelwood, fiber and medicinal needs of people; to international trade of important materials; and to sustaining ecosystems essential to strategies for maintaining biological diversity thereby providing a legacy for future generations.

The 1986 IUFRO Congress in Ljubljana recognized the problems of air pollution and tropical deforestation. IUFRO responded through special programmes. Air pollution and deforestation continue to be major issues. Since then, there has been a dramatic increase in concerns for the sustainability of forests, the role of forestry in socio-economic development, the impacts of global warming on forests, the effects of forests on global warming and the status of forests among changes in land uses.

These concerns over the use, management and protection of forests, their productivity and their many values lead to an unprecedented urgency for developing and applying new professional and scientific knowledge. Interactions among such pervasive issues as global climate change and air quality, on the one hand, and temperate and tropical forests of the world, on the other, are inadequately understood. Increased knowledge of both the biological and physical aspects of forests as well as socio-economic, policy and cultural dimensions are essential.

Forest science and the forestry research institutions are central to resolving the complex issues facing forestry. Globally, the capacity for
forestry research has not kept pace with the growing magnitude of the problems. In many developing countries it has actually declined.

Forest science becomes even larger and more complex as forestry links to agriculture, the environment and sustainable economic development. Science will focus increasingly on tropical forests.

Especially important is the need to coordinate the numerous forestry research activities among developing countries and to increase cooperation with ongoing programmes in agriculture. The expanding task now recognized for the conservation and management of forests brings great urgency to the work of IUFRO and world forest science.

Congress Recommendations

Governments, international development agencies and forestry research organizations are encouraged to foster international cooperation and coordination of research programme needs identified in the Tropical Forestry Action Plan. Accordingly, IUFRO should strengthen linkages for the Special Programme for Developing Countries (SPDC) with other international organizations, especially the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). Though programmes of SPDC should take closely into account the work of these and other organizations, the SPDC’s method of operation should be proactive and emphasize its comparative advantages.

IUFRO, recognizing the implications of air pollution and of global climate change, should encourage initiation, expansion and redirection of basic and applied research concerning the role of forests. Forestry research organizations in both temperate and tropical countries as well as in the Mediterranean region should strengthen or initiate programmes studying the effects of air pollution on forest ecosystems and expand research on the relationships of global climate change to trees and forests. IUFRO’s special task force on air pollution should expand its scope accordingly. It recommends a vigorous programme of monitoring forest ecosystems for the long term, using standardized proven methods. As a worldwide, non-governmental organization IUFRO must play a leading role in helping to implement an international, integrated approach. In addition, studies of socio-economic and policy options need to be considered.

IUFRO urges that the building, strengthening and maintaining of institutions for forestry research, education of new scientists and the continuing education of present scientists receive urgent attention. Development of future forest scientists and an increased capacity to conduct research, especially in developing countries, is crucial. IUFRO’s special role in nurturing and extending the efforts of forest scientists through activities of its divisions and the SPDC will be encouraged and expanded.

The international forest science community is obliged to inform others of scientific findings and their implications for forest practice as well as to inform public opinion in the debate on forestry issues, globally and locally. Existing and new scientific findings must be made available in more effective ways, especially within the developing countries and between scientists of developed and developing countries. IUFRO’s divisions, programmes and task forces have a particular role in addressing this need. IUFRO encourages forestry scientists to participate in and support the decision process in forestry issues.

To achieve these essential objectives, funding for forestry research must be expanded substantially. Governments, international agencies, donors and others supporting research programmes are encouraged to take a long-term view of the growing global concerns about the sustainability of forests in meeting the environmental, economic and social needs of people. To do so will result in a strengthened commitment and support for forest sciences. Although the need exists at all levels, particularly crucial are forestry research programmes for developing countries.

The Congress Recommendations are suitable for presentation to governments by IUFRO’s International Council Members.