



## Press Conference on Forests and Climate Change

“Work is under way to prepare for a new future as we are at the dawn of a new era for forestry”, the XIII World Forestry Congress was told on Wednesday by Tim Rollinson, Director General of the UK Forestry Commission, who chaired the Special Forum on Forests and Climate Change.

“We heard from our host country about the need to simplify”, said Mr Rollinson, who, after the extremely well attended plenary session, extracted the following points:

- 1) need to send strong message to world leaders;
- 2) crucially the forestry community is us;
- 3) responsibility and truly sustainable actions can be implemented;
- 4) we should be and need to be optimistic.

Asked whether at the XIII WFC planted forests were considered projects that could enter a mechanism like REDD, **Jan Heino, Assistant Director General of the Forestry Department (FAO)** said: “We should not exclude any potential means of mitigating climate change. If these are established and used according to the voluntary guidelines provided by FAO that would be efficient, provided that we have good land use planning also in place.”

**Wulf Killmann (FAO)** added that afforestation and reforestation, that is establishing plantations under certain rules, has been part of the Kyoto Protocol since 2003.

Interest was expressed in the example of the mountain pine beetle, introduced by **Avrim Lazar, CEO of the Forest Products Association of Canada** in his speech. Asked whether that was a metaphor or something that was considered to be happening, Mr Lazar, said that it was not a hypothetical example, but rather the reality.

Mr Lazar remarked that out of 30 different communities which are dependent on the forests, in Canada, 25.000 people already lost their livelihood because of it. “Climate change is something thought to happen in the future” added Mr Lazar “but in Canada it is something which is happening today.”

Another point made by Mr Lazar was that, “We also often talk about climate change as something that will destroy the geosphere. That is the easy part. The geosphere and biosphere live in an intimate relationship with each other. We, as species of biology, are organisms interdependent with the rest of the biosphere. Climate change has hit us so hard in the head, in the heart, in the soul. It’s something we have experienced in our homes.”

Asked about the overall outcome of the Congress, Mr Heino responded that “One of the hopes and objectives of such a huge Congress is to convey a strong message about the role of forestry to the global community. It is up to the individual countries and the ongoing discussion to see what role forests can play. We must admit that the forestry sector is not making full use of communication. I think we need a World Forestry Congress at least every sixth year.”

**Gehrad Dieterle, Environmental and Socially Sustainable Development, World Bank** said that “Forests have a lot of potential actually. Everyone seems to have accepted that, we need forests to address the issue of climate change efficiently. Forests are looked at as if they were carbon stocks. If enough money flowed into the forests, deforestation may stop. That may be part of protecting forests but most of the forests in the world are used by people so the approach and the message from this Congress is quite powerful: we will not stop deforestation until we integrate good forest management for multiple benefits into the climate change agenda.”

Asked whether it would be useful to incorporate the commodity and food part to the discourse on forests, Dr Killmann responded that between 70% and 80% of deforestation is due to conversion of forests for cattle farming or for agriculture purposes. "What we need in future, and this will be a great challenge, is to balance the different land uses" said Dr Killmann. "The biggest challenge will be how to feed the increasing population of this world. These are the issues we have to deal with. As Avrim said before, we have to think systematically, we have to think out of our boxes."

**Peter Saile (GTZ)** agreed with Mr Killmann that "We cannot separate the analysis of the forestry sector from what is happening in rural areas, where there is increasing competition for space. We keep losing forests to produce for agriculture, biofuels and food consumption."

Concerning last scale investment in agro business, Mr Dieterle said: "We have always had large scale investments in hand in the past. But you may remember the price shock in the last few years, there was a food crisis and so suddenly prices for basic commodities rose. Some countries obtained leases for huge land areas to secure their food basis and the same is happening in bioenergy. There are subsidies for bioenergy and we at the World Bank see that with some concern as the safeguard for making such large investments is lacking. There is now an initiative to define rules for investment in large scale agriculture so that investment is respectful of the rights of local people. This is a serious issue, this is going on not only in Latin America, but also in several African Countries, and in Asia, and this needs to be taken very seriously."

**Leopoldo Montes, Secretary General of the XIII World Forestry Congress**, explained Argentina's stand with respect to the situation forests are in: "Argentina has methodology, institutions producing good information based reports, it has industry, it has good forest potential. It seems to me that the Congress is setting out the conditions for a national plan. The minister of agriculture already quoted the potential in the university, as well as of the people working in the forest cluster. We have all the elements in the Mercosur to launch a good plan for what we need, we have the basis for that."

Several speakers at the Forum on Climate Change mentioned REDD, some of them adding that one of the parameters found to be difficult to evaluate were corruption levels. Asked if the World Bank knows corruption levels by region and how they influence forest projects, Mr Dieterle answered: "There is a list of countries which are ranked according to these corruption indexes. In the context of forestry unfortunately the corruption indexes exist. Need and greed are both contributing to corruption."

"The power of corruption is simply poverty. The need to make ends meet. There is also greed and that is when we talk about concession management. That is when the role of the government becomes very important. Poverty, land tenure, right and transparency are becoming the bottleneck in the future and that might lead to a tremendous struggle to make it equitable and just to allocate funds to forestry."

**Trond Gabrielsen, Norway**, added: "We put a lot of emphasis on holding countries accountable should corruption be seen in these huge funds being put in place. We have a so called phase approach, which is a result based one following the successful reduction of emissions."

**Christer Segerstéen, Confederation of European Forest Owners**, added: "In Sweden pulp industry started to use biomass. We have started a growing-forest project, involving indigenous peoples in tropical areas. Some of us have a better situation we can come together and do something."

Asked about the deadline to join in this care for the environment so that it becomes a general movement towards the achievement of a vital balance, Mr Lazar said: "There is no global agreement to address deforestation. We have no global instrument. The hope is that Copenhagen will give us one. This Congress is evidence that global communities see that there is no climate change solution without an integrated programme."

Mr Dieterle concluded by saying: "Of course, there are countries which have positive forest cover development. Costa Rica in South America, and India. India has stopped deforestation, with a national action plan on climate change called "green India" aiming to increase the forest cover from 22 to 33%. China has stopped deforestation altogether. Forest cover is growing rapidly in Europe, about 1% per year, and in the Scandinavian countries. A big problem persists in boreal forests, Russia, Canada and Alaska."

As some very interesting conclusions are emerging from the international debate, just as the WFC turns to a close, discussion is now aiming to converge into a message to be presented at COP 15.