

Special Event on Forestry Research and Education

24 April 2008, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Welcome and Opening Address

by

Mr. Sarath Fernando

Chairman of APAFRI

Distinguished guests, Fellow colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon!

First of all, I would like to extend a warm welcome to each and every one assembled here for the opening of the Special Event on Forestry Research and Education. This Special Event, held in conjunction with the Asia Pacific Forestry Commission 22nd Session, during this Asia Pacific Forestry Week, is jointly organized by APAFRI and the Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE). On behalf of APAFRI, I wish to thank ICFRE for the initial conceptualization of this Special Event, and the invitation to APAFRI for co-organizing this highly pertinent event during the Asia Pacific Forestry Week in Hanoi.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During the past decade the forestry scene in the Asia Pacific region had undergone rapid and drastic changes to say the least. Fast economic growth experienced by many countries, especially China and India, as well as some of the other countries, increases demand for forest products which led to fast depletion of forests in most of the countries in the region. On the other hand, wealth also brings along an ever growing awareness and willingness to tackle problems associated with environmental pollution and potential

impact on global climate. Forests, for centuries, thought to be providers of only wood and non-wood forest products, are attracting more attention as providers of a wide range of goods and services that are increasingly gaining importance and affecting our daily life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

APAFRI, the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions, an association established by a programme of FAO nearly 13 years ago, has been actively involved in many of the forestry activities in the region, and has been increasingly recognized as the regional representative in many international fora. Currently the association has more than 70 institutional and individual members; and most of the national forestry research institutions and many of the forestry agencies and forestry schools in countries of the Asia-Pacific region are members of APAFRI. APAFRI, by organizing events such as workshops and training courses to promote information exchange and sharing, and to build-up capacities in key competencies among researchers and forestry professionals in the region, is contributing, and will continue to contribute, towards achieving the objectives of many regional and international initiatives, such as the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Special Event thus is organized with the aim of providing a platform for the forestry professionals, researchers and academia, to share and exchange ideas and experiences of tackling and coping with the rapid changing scenario. I wish all success in fulfilling the objective of this Special Event.

Thank you