

Asia-Pacific Forestry Week

Hanoi, Vietnam
21-26 April 2008

Closing address

by

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Distinguished Mr Hua Duc Nhi, Vice Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development,
Distinguished Mr Nguyen Ngoc Binh, Director-General of the Forest Department,
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development,
Distinguished participants and colleagues,

At the closing of this first-ever Asia-Pacific Forestry Week, it is my great pleasure to congratulate you all for this highly successful event.

The inaugural Asia-Pacific Forestry Week assembled many of the most outstanding forestry leaders, some of the most eloquent and knowledgeable forestry advocates, and many of the finest forestry minds, available to the Asia-Pacific region, and indeed the world. We have all greatly benefited from the ideas, learning and experiences that have been generously shared during the rich array of events that have been woven together to create this watershed event.

An outstanding feature of Forestry Week has been the broad range of innovative events – more than thirty – arranged by nearly fifty partner agencies. There has been outstanding diversity and innovation in the topics and formats these have taken. We

have had plenary sessions, dialogues, sessions, seminars, workshops, meetings, networks, managed debates, field trips, book launches, and a Café Scientifique!

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of Asia-Pacific Forestry Week, “*Forestry in a changing world,*” recognized that decisions are being made in new and evolving contexts on the world stage.

Let me now try to sum up a few of the most significant outcomes from the 22nd session of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission and the entire Forestry Week. Many of the important recommendations arising from APFC also reflect themes and issues discussed in the plenary sessions and parallel events of Forestry Week.

1. During the week, we repeatedly stated that *climate change* has been the vehicle that has returned forestry to centre stage of the international agenda during the past two or three years. Among the recommendations on climate change arising from the Commission Session were calls for greater attention and assistance to building capacities of countries to enable them to participate in the increasingly complex mechanisms being developed within the climate change agenda. FAO is certainly cognizant of this need. Let me also reiterate the request to our many institutional partners – that we collaborate and cooperate to ensure efficient delivery of assistance to the countries to help them deal with this complex issue. The session also noted the clear request to further promote inter-sectoral and international co-operation and collaboration in developing responses to emerging forestry challenges.

2. We talked on the theme of “*People and forests,*” recognizing that people-centred development is increasingly the focus of forestry policies. We talked about the mainstreaming of decentralization, participatory decision making, benefit-sharing mechanisms and empowerment of people who live in and around forests. A key

recommendation from APFC was to continue efforts to enhance community-based forest management and forestry initiatives that help reduce poverty.

3. On the theme of “*Trade, forest law compliance and governance*,” we reviewed the diverse nature of illegal forestry activities and associated trade. Governments, civil society and the private sector came together to discuss interactions between forest law enforcement, governance and trade. It was very heartening to see all countries and sectoral groups – including producers, processors and consumers – assuming responsibility, and expressing commitment, to combating this serious challenge.

4. As to *activities of FAO and the APFC* in the region, FAO received a long list of requests from the session, including calls for FAO’s continued support for executive training in forest policy, forestry education networks, the regional forest policy initiative and national forest programme activities.

5. Finally, in the discussion on the *Changing roles of forestry agencies*, countries demonstrated a remarkable awareness of, and readiness for, the need to constantly adapt forestry institutions to the rapid changes of society.

Distinguished colleagues,

Change has become a constant in our lives and in our work. The world is changing rapidly and the forestry sector cannot ask it to turn more slowly. Therefore, the drive for continuous improvement, to do things better, to reinvent ourselves and our institutions, must be ever-present. We have to continuously question whether we are focusing on the right issues. Do we have the right skills and the right people to implement our programmes? The institutional structures – do they empower us to work efficiently to meet increasing demands for participation, social equity, and empowerment? We also have to anticipate emerging changes and demands.

Fellow participants, ladies and gentlemen,

I have found this first-ever Asia-Pacific Forestry Week to be enlightening, informative and extremely enjoyable. To a very large part, this success is due to our hosts. On behalf of FAO, I wish to offer my very sincere thanks to the Government of Viet Nam, and especially to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Forestry Sector Support Partnership, for their great generosity and outstanding efforts in organizing Asia-Pacific Forestry Week. I am fully aware that the organizational burden has been immense, and appreciate that this burden has been shouldered by our hosts with unflagging enthusiasm and unfailing courtesy. I particularly thank Mr Binh for his excellent leadership and able chairmanship of the 22nd session of APFC. I also extend my warm thanks to the Vice-Chairs Messrs Karma Dupka and Kanawi Pouru and Madam Zhang Hongyan for accepting the responsibility and for sharing the chairing duties. The contribution of our Rapporteur, Mr Neil Hughes is also much appreciated.

Let me also offer thanks to the many, many organizations that have enriched Forestry Week by bringing innovations and creative approaches to various events and for contributing important financial resources. Similar thanks, to all of you, who have contributed to this invigorating event.

Such collaboration and goodwill will long be remembered as a crowning feature of Asia-Pacific Forestry Week.

Thank you.