# In the footsteps of Mike Wingfield

**Michael (Mike) Wingfield,** Professor and Founding Director of the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute of the University of Pretoria, South Africa was appointed President of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) for the 2015–2019 term at the 24th IUFRO World Congress in October 2014. He has been involved in IUFRO activities for more than 30 years. As researcher he is broadly interested in the health of trees and has conducted research on tree pests and pathogens globally.

**What, in your mind, are the implications of the Paris Agreement on climate change to forest research?**

The Paris Agreement was an extraordinary achievement. Now we need to focus on how to meet the defined goals of limiting global warming and cutting emissions. We know that forests and landscapes will play an important role in the implementation of the Agreement, especially when we consider the long-term goal of achieving a balance between man-made emissions and the removal of sinks of greenhouse gases. What does all this mean for forest science and research? On one hand, research is needed to collect data and develop analytical tools to measure and analyze the progress that is made in meeting the climate goals. On the other hand, scientific knowledge is vital because of the immense complexity of the whole issue. We clearly cannot look at climate aspects in isolation; it will be crucial to consider them in combination with economic and livelihood aspects. The overall goal is to decide how to achieve multifunctional landscapes that consider all of these aspects, from ensuring a positive carbon balance to safeguarding land use and tenure rights, as well as providing services such as food production, water resources and biodiversity. In IUFRO, we have placed great emphasis on exactly these overarching research topics.

**How do you see the future of forest research globally, its' opportunities and challenges?**

In many parts of the world, including Europe, environmental benefits of forests such as carbon sequestration and human health are increasingly considered to be more important than traditional purposes, such as wood production. These changing priorities pose challenges for forest research, but also create new opportunities. For example, forest landscape restoration can play a significant role in mitigating climate change while at the same time improving the livelihoods of rural communities. In order to be able to effectively address these changing priorities, forest science organizations need to expand the scope of their research and interact with a broader spectrum of research users. For instance, forest landscape restoration requires integrated approaches across various land uses. Furthermore, there is growing need to think and act globally. Let me give you an example from my own field of research: non-native (alien) invasive pathogens and insects are increasingly damaging natural and planted forests, sometimes having massive economic impacts. The impacts of climate change are also contributing to these shocking losses. The problem can be tackled only if scientists around the globe collaborate on research projects and share relevant data. In my view, global collaboration will define the future of

research, none less than in forestry. The fundamental structure of IUFRO defines collaboration in research and together with EFI, IUFRO can and must play a key role in enabling and facilitating forestry research networks globally.

**IUFRO and EFI are planning to intensify their collaboration. What kind of opportunities do you see for close collaboration in the future?**

EFI and IUFRO already collaborate very effectively in a number of key activities. For instance, EFI's **Christophe Orazio** leads the new IUFRO Task Force on Sustainable Planted Forests for a Greener Future. This Task Force constitutes a follow-up to the 3rd International Congress on Planted Forests that called for increased international scientific cooperation. This example illustrates that many of today's research questions cannot be confined to either the European or the global level. For the same reason, EFI Director **Marc Palahi** and I share the desire to further strengthen the collaboration between EFI and IUFRO by building on the mutual strengths of our respective organizations. One of these strengths is that a significant number of European researchers are actively involved as office-holders in both organizations. And there are many additional opportunities to collaborate. For example, IUFRO has just established a new Task Force Forest Education jointly with the International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA), and EFI could easily join in this activity. Also EFI is implementing a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the capacity of future leaders in research and practice. I believe that we will be able to join forces in this important initiative.

**IUFRO adopted a new strategy last year. EFI will develop its new strategy during this year. Do you have any advice you wish to give to EFI in this respect?**

Rather than giving advice to EFI, let me say that there is a lot that others can learn from EFI regarding strategy development. For example, at the early stages EFI recognized the significance of foresight for informing its own strategy. Therefore, I am most grateful that leading EFI experts have been closely involved in the development of a new IUFRO Task Force on Foresight for Forest Sector Planning. This Task Force will help IUFRO formulate its own strategic priorities in the future. If there is one suggestion that I might share with EFI, this would be to give strong recognition within its own strategy to the importance of collaboration with international partners, such as IUFRO. A clear commitment to build on networks, share resources and learn from each other will make the new strategy of EFI even more powerful.

Eric Schramm