

## Forests are more than carbon - World Forestry Congress sends a message to Copenhagen climate summit including key findings of recent IUFRO-led study

In a strong statement to the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), delegates to the 13<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress (WFC) held in October in Argentina express their great concern about the impacts of climate change on forests and call for urgent action. COP 15 will be convened from 7 to 18 December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark.



Professor Risto Seppälä at the WFC (courtesy of IISD)

The WFC underlines the key role of forests in and beyond the global climate change debate. It sees a pressing need to strengthen the capacity of forests to adapt to climate change and to promote mitigation efforts not only with a view to ensuring the contribution of forests to regulating the global carbon balance. Forests are more than carbon, they provide multiple ecosystem services such as water, food and commercial forest products to all of us, and they are warrantors of the livelihood and cultural identity of indigenous peoples and forest-dependent local communities. In this context, forest protection, restoration and the conservation of biodiversity should be of top priority worldwide.

The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) has a significant share in the WFC's message. At the WFC „Forum on Forests and Climate Change“, Professor Risto Seppälä from the Finnish Forest Research Institute and Chair of the IUFRO-led Expert Panel on Adaptation of Forests to Climate Change of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) presented the key results of the Panel's Global Assessment Report to an audience of over 2000.

Seppälä warned that rising temperatures will reduce adaptation possibilities and, as a result of climate change, forests may turn from carbon sinks to net emission sources of carbon in the coming decades. He explained that *sustainable forest management is essential for reducing the vulnerability of forests to climate change* and pointed out that *unmitigated climate change would, during the course of the current century, exceed the adaptive capacity of many forests even if adaptation measures are fully implemented*. These findings of the study were eventually included in the WFC's message to the COP15.

In its statement the WFC also addresses the issue of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD). At the WFC Panel on 'REDD Initiatives for Early Action' moderated by Peter Mayer, IUFRO Executive Director, delegates underscored the importance of reducing poverty as a major driving force behind deforestation. Actions of REDD *plus* recognizing the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of carbon stocks in developing countries should definitely be included in the agreement on long-term cooperative action under the UNFCCC.

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### Useful links:

WFC Message to COP15 and Congress Declaration: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/wfc/xiii/en/>

CPF-Global Forest Expert Panels: <http://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/>

COP 15: <http://en.cop15.dk/>

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