REPORT SITE VISIT PARIS

Date of visit: Monday, 26 February 2018

Attendance:

Jean-Luc Peyron  ECOFOR, Director and IUFRO Board member
Jean-Marc Guehl  ECOFOR, Chairman of the Board
Coralie Zettor  ECOFOR, Events Manager
Andreas Kleinschmit von Legenfeld  FCBA, Director of Innovation and Research
Sandra Luque  Irstea, Director of Research and IUFRO Board member
Raoul Mille  Irstea, Director of International Relations
Philippe Gérardin  Lorraine University, Professor, Director of Lermab
Robert Mavsar  European Forest Institute, Deputy Director
Eric Teissier du Cros  Former IUFRO Vice-President and INRA Research Director
Stéphanie Eyraud  Viparis, International Sales
Laure Filloux  Viparis, International Business Development Manager
Clarisse Dupont  Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau, Congress Development Manager
Maryline Piel  Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau, Congress Development Manager
John Parrotta  IUFRO – Vice-President
Alexander Buck  IUFRO – Executive Director
Renate Prüller  IUFRO – Senior Officer
Meriem Fournier  AgroParisTech, Director of the Faculty of Forestry in Nancy
Alain Billand  Cirad, Head of Department Environment and Societies
Catherine Bastien  Inra, Head Department Forests, Meadows and Inland Waters
Erwin Dreyer  Inra, President of Nancy Research Center, EFI Board member
Myriam Legay  ONF, Head Department Research Development and Innovation

Arrival and Welcome

Check distance from airport to City Centre/ Congress Venue
As indicated in the bidding documents, there are two international airports: Paris-Charles de Gaulle (CDG) and Paris-Orly (Orly); a new high-speed connection to Charles de Gaulle (CDG) airport (20 minutes) is expected to provide service in 2023. In addition to Express regional trains and metro, Air France provides direct shuttles between Orly airport and Paris (12€) and between CGD airport and the congress center (17€). A taxi ride to the city center takes approximately 45-minutes (fixed price of 40 € from Orly airport and 45 € from CDG).

Short introduction to the bid by hosting organization
The bid was introduced by Jean-Luc Peyron, Director of ECOFOR. Members of the supporting research institutions contributed to the discussion and mentioned key points of the rationale for providing the bid.

- There is a long history of forest research in France, tracing back to the age of enlightenment, and in the dissemination of forest research worldwide; the meeting of a Committee of Directors of the Experimental Stations from France, Switzerland, Germany and Austria at Badenweiler in 1891 laid the foundation for the formal establishment of IUFRO a year later;
Officeholders from France have been playing a leading role in IUFRO (Philibert Guinier, IUFRO President 1929-1932; Eric Teissier du Cros, IUFRO Vice-President 2001-2005; numerous other officeholders as members of the Board);

France has not hosted a Congress since the VIII IUFRO World Congress in Nancy 1932; INRA-ECOFOR submitted a bid for hosting the XXV IUFRO World Congress in 2019 (Bordeaux);

France is a major and diverse forest country: 31% forested area in metropolitan France, 97% in French Guyana; highest forest biomass in EU (incl. overseas territories); first biological reserve ever created in the world (1893); largest European artificial forest (Landes de Gascogne);

In 2024, France will celebrate 200 years of high forest education. By hosting the Congress, it aims to promote science collaboration within Europe and globally, involve young scientists and students, and facilitate contacts between researchers and managers on the basis of the overall vision "Forests for Resilient Landscapes and Societies". This vision promotes interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in science within and beyond the forest sector and is organized around two major challenges for forestry in the XXI century: adaptation to rapidly changing climate and provision of ecosystem services to support resilient landscapes and viable economies;

In this regard, the Congress also aims to stimulate the science-policy interface; it would contribute to taking stock of the climatic situation a decade after Paris Agreement and drawing conclusions for the world’s forests; it could also help France evaluate its strategies and policies for forest sector (national forest and wood program 2016-2026; strategy for research and innovation – target 2025);

Attention was drawn to strong historical links with many countries in the world, including francophone Africa. Therefore, the Congress could strengthen contacts in francophone Africa and attract support for and participation of scientists from Africa.

High number of expected participants because attractive location Paris; close to EC (Brussels), UN (Geneva), FAO (Rome), IUCN (Gland), etc.

**Explanation and discussion on Organizational Plan**

The host organization should explain the structure of the organizational plan

The explanation of the organizational plan was provided by Jean-Luc Peyron and representatives of ECOFOR and IUFRO member organizations, and Viparis (Palais des Congrès de Paris) and the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau (Office du Tourisme et des Congrès).

The main structure of the organization is identical to the one proposed in the bidding document: a national COC coordinated by ECOFOR and composed of French IUFRO members and experts, as well as a Congress Management Team (CMT) consisting of a core team of COC members and cooperating closely with a PCO in order to manage day-to-day activities. The CMT would collaborate closely with the CSC. COC Sub-committees would be established on planning, communication, trade, excursions and volunteers, etc., but no details were provided;

The COC would invite partners, such as the European Forest Institute, to hold their annual conferences/ conventions back-to-back with the IUFRO World Congress;

The COC would also seek to involve UNESCO (for support of participants from Africa), the CGIAR (which is headquartered in Montpellier) and other partners, such as CIFOR, OECD;

For the time being, no PCO has been chosen. However, five potential PCOs have been invited to submit applications;
• The traditional IUFRO in-Congress excursions deal with topics of interest to participants and provide an opportunity for potential IUFRO partners and sponsors to get involved in the Congress organization;

• Concerning side-events, the IUFRO representatives cautioned against the idea of using the Conference Center for side events of the forest-based sector during the excursion day. The majority of Congress participants uses the traditional option of an in-Congress excursion for professional contacts and networking and therefore would not be available for participating in side events on that day. The French representatives explained that the idea was to bring to the Congress (apart of it) additional participants (from related sectors, more participants from industry for example) who would be neither in the Congress nor in the excursion day without these side-events

• As regards local transportation, a 7-day metro card for Paris city center would be available at a cost of (currently) Euro 36.80. The IUFRO representatives suggested exploring the possibility of making available a free metro card for public transport in Paris (for information, one single ticket is 1.90 €).

Check to what extent support is given to the bid by the forest scientific community

• Support available from the forest scientific community would be provided through ECOFOR and its members. ECOFOR is a French public body created to promote research coordination on (tropical and temperate) forest ecosystems, and to strengthen the science-policy interface between its various members from research, monitoring, education, policy, and management organizations;

• ECOFOR Board meeting in November 2017 confirmed that “The Board of ECOFOR is enthusiastic to the idea of organizing a great World forest event”;

• Some ECOFOR members have been involved in the preparation of the bid. Representatives of supporting members permanently or (due to concurrent Agriculture Fair in Paris) partly participated in the site visit.

• Support has formally been expressed (through letters of support) from ECOFOR, the Office National des Forêts (ONF), INRA, the Technology Institute FCBA, the Mayor of Paris, the Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau and the European Forest Institute. Support by other partners was in the process of being formalized;

• The European Forest Institute (EFI) confirmed that it would support also other bids for hosting the IUFRO World Congress 2024, but had only been invited by ECOFOR to do so for the Paris bid;

• There is particular interest of building bridges with Paris-based international organizations, such as UNESCO, OECD, etc.

Check quality of cooperation of host organization with IUFRO

• There is a tradition of cooperation with several of the host organizations, more particularly there has been good cooperation with France during the past 125th Anniversary Congress in Freiburg 2017;

• Two current and one former member of the IUFRO Board participated in the site visit and have contributed to preparing the bid;

• Through the long lasting tradition of collaboration specific knowledge on IUFRO matters is available.
Explanation and discussion on Financial Plan

The host organization should explain the bases on which the budget presented in the bid has been calculated and the underlying assumptions.

The explanation of the financial plan was presented by Jean-Luc Peyron and representatives of Viparis Palais des Congrès Paris. Several aspects of the financial plan were discussed in more detail.

- The financial plan presented at the site visit was identical to the one proposed in the bidding document;
- 10% of income from registration fees is indicated to be set aside to support IUFRO in organizing the scientific content;
- The figures are based on a total of 3,500 participants, about 500 of which labeled as invited participants (i.e. VIP, volunteers, etc.);
- The IUFRO representatives noted that the envisaged share of income from registration fees was rather high (70%), as was the projected income from sponsors (29%); also figures related to income from trade exhibition of Euro 148,000 seem to be unrealistic and should be verified;
- It was made clear that all figures (both expenses and revenues) are VAT excluded;
- As regards related financial risks, there is not (yet) a commitment regarding guaranteed financial support by the French government and/or an indication of the government’s readiness to cover a possible gap between income and expenses. It was clarified that ECOFOR would be ready to stand in for Euro 300,000 in case the projected number of 3,000 paying participants or expected income from sponsors would not be reached. IUFRO representatives pointed out that the ideal scenario for IUFRO would be a letter from the French government/administration confirming support to the organization of the Congress and for covering the related risk;
- The Scientific Assistance Programme (SAP) was presented to be co-funded by French agencies supporting cooperation with developing countries (such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Development Agency, French Fund for World Environment). Also FAO and EU were mentioned as complementary sponsors. In this context, the IUFRO representatives highlighted the need to explain in more detail the figures mentioned for the SAP, and to specify related financial support. They noted that it would seem unrealistic that FAO would provide financial support to the SAP;
- Currently the indicative financial plan is based on 3,000 paying participants. For the purpose of better comparison, three different financial scenarios related to a projected attendance of 2000, 3000 and 4000 participants respectively should be developed and presented.

Visit of proposed Congress Venue

The Palais des Congrès de Paris is an event location and Convention centre, well known for many years of experience (since 1974) and hosts most of the international and European congresses existing in the world. It provides excellent visibility for the Congress in a fast-evolving Parisian district close to the wooden park area of Bois de Boulogne.

Check distance to City Centre/Airport

The Palais des Congrès Paris is located in the city center; The direct connection (10 min. walk from Champs Élysées and the Arc de Triomphe; automatic metro station inside the building (metro line 1 crossing Paris from east to west and connecting to all major Paris locations within less than 30 minutes) and to the airport (40 minutes from the two major international airports Charles de Gaulle (CDG) and Orly) make the location of the congress venue very suitable for an international congress.
Check size of location for plenary session, conference rooms
There are several possible arrangements at this large modular Congress venue. The Congress layout as proposed for 2024 provides for:

- Compact layout concentrated on one floor (possibility to be extended over two floors) with no long walk for the delegates, or dead-end for exhibitors;
- Easy connection between exhibition space and conference rooms, with the exhibition area being arranged in the center of the congress; possibilities for poster presentation in front of the session rooms and in the walk ways;
- Size of Main Auditorium (plenary hall): full auditorium of 3723 pax and half up to 1,813 pax.;
- 14 up to 25 parallel rooms for technical sessions ranging from approx. 60 to approx. 300 pax.;
- Two to four parallel sub-plenaries possible, ranging from approx. 400 to 800 pax.;
- Registration and information center, media room, office rooms for IUFRO President, Secretariat and MC are available at the venue;
- Social areas can be arranged according to IUFRO’s wishes;
- Two 4* hotels onsite: the Hyatt Regency Hotel (995 rooms) and The Mariott Le Méridien Etoile (1025 rooms);
- The woods of the Bois de Boulogne are currently prolonged into the square in front of the Palais de Congrès. The resulting park area could be a location for a tree planting event. Other options for tree planting event are available (Saclay, Fontainebleau – first bioreserve created in 1853, Botanical Garden of Paris Jardin des Plantes).

Check the available technical equipment (WI-FI, loud-speakers, beamers etc.)
All technical equipment is available:
- Beamers and facilities for interpretation are available. Costs are not included in the budget;
- Flexible and high-quality conference rooms are soundproofed and can be adapted to special requirements;
- The whole Congress venue is equipped with WI-FI.

Check location for food services
The Palais des Congrès is combined with a shopping space in the ground floor level. There is on-site catering and restaurants available. During the visit, an on-site caterer provided a light business lunch of a very high quality at the meeting room.
- The registration fee does not include lunch at the Congress venue;
- Viparis works with 10 preferred catering services and could provide catering for ice-breaking events and receptions in the Congress centre.

Visit of proposed facilities for special events
Check distance to City Centre/Airport/Congress Venue
Two facilities for special events were proposed, the Paris City Hall and the Museum of Fairgrounds.

The Paris City Hall (Hôtel de Ville de Paris):
- Located in front of Notre Dame, on the metro line 1, in the heart of Paris;
- The city of Paris offers the City Hall reception rooms for hosting an event for up to 1,200 pax (see also letter of Lady Mayor of Paris);
- Special arrangements are possible regarding the needs of IUFRO; the reception rooms could be a sumptuous location, e.g. for an ice-breaking event or the President’s Reception/Dinner.
Museum of Fairgrounds (*Musée des Arts Forains*):
- Located in 19th century wine warehouses in Bercy (metro line 14, Cour St. Emilion); approx. 30 minutes from the Congress centre, and an additional 10 min. walk;
- This highly entertaining museum presents one of the biggest collections of fairground art, including hundred-year-old carousels, organ music and automaton shows. It offers facilities for social events for up to 2,000 pax. It could be an option for a Congress farewell party.

**Discussion on remaining questions**
- VISA: France forms part of the Schengen area; France hosted numerous large scientific conferences in the past (e.g. Congress of botanists); there is close collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Development Agency;
- SAFETY: Like other countries, France has been struck by terrorism. Measures have been taken and big events organized, e.g. Climate Conference; European Football Championship, and in 2024 Olympic Games;
- DATE: Summer 2024, between July and September, potentially 7-13 July 2024;
- Accommodation: it has been suggested to provide a graphic illustration of different types of hotels including low budget hotels with indication of approximate prices.