

## **STRONG DEBATES AT THE XIV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS ORGANIZED BY FAO IN DURBAN**

The 14<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress (WFC) reunited for the first time on African's soil 4000 participants from 142 countries between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September 2015 in Durban.

The WFC is the largest gathering on forests and forestry products and is held at six-year intervals by a host country and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). The participation at the congress was opened to people from all countries, regions and sectors – public, private, educational, NGO and research.

The opening ceremony and plenary sessions had as guests the UN general secretary, FAO president, the South African president and over 30 ministers and secretaries of state for forestry, science/research, environment, education of all continents.

The initial thought was to bring together the global forestry community to review and analyse the key issues and to share ways of addressing them about the main topic: deforestation, depreciation, desertification, the forest balance between fuel, food and environment and superior use of forest products.

The panel discussions and the plenary sessions were dominated by the role of political organizations, global corporations and monetary funds. The "forestry model" that promotes large-scale monoculture tree plantations brought a lot of critiques, especially from forest organizations like Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations (RECOMA). A further critic aspects claimed by participants was the elitist registration fees rating between 600 USD – all days attendance and respectively 225 USD (low, low-middle and upper-middle income countries) with out including any water, refreshments or even snacks during the 5 congress days.

The plenary sessions were started with significant delays due to local VIP speakers or not simultaneous translation from not official congress languages of the politicians from big player countries. Due to these aspects the proposed schedules were not more followed and very restrictive slots of about 5 minutes were allowed for the talks, mainly without time for questioning and debating.

According to FAO, WFC2015 aimed to:

- help position forestry as an integral part of sustainable development at all levels – national, regional and global;
- identify and review major issues facing forests and forestry, and propose technical, scientific and policy interventions to promote forest sustainability;
- provide an open forum in which the world's forestry community and partners from other, related sectors can share and debate their knowledge, views and latest findings and establish and consolidate partnerships and networks;
- showcase the latest developments and innovations in global forestry, using multimedia platforms to illustrate practical applications and linkages;
- ensure that critical issues are tackled and that all key stakeholders, particularly youth, students, professionals, women and local communities, have a platform on which to voice the ideas and concerns of their constituencies.

All in one, it is expected that in six years the next world forestry congress will bring more transparency and will be accessible to a larger scale of participants, also from the local communities around the world, that are directly affected about the future development or destruction of the forests.

Romania were represented by about 30 delegates from the resort ministry, forestry research institutes and higher education. 12 delegates from the Faculty of Forestry of Transilvania University joined the Congress with 5 technical papers and 3 poster presentations. Prof.dr.ing.dr. Marius C. Barbu - the author was involved as expert in a plenary and a subtheme session presenting also many papers.

*Paper written by:*  
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