

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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AT

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**THEME: *FOREST MANAGEMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY:
Advancing an understanding of Caribbean forest dynamics and creating long-term regional networks***

SALUTATIONS:

I deem this an honor to have been asked to present the keynote address for this the 16th Caribbean foresters Meeting. I am even more excited having accepted your invitation to participate in what I consider to be an extremely worthwhile activity within the Caribbean Region and especially among individuals who are able to speak 'trees'. Jamaica has been participating in CFM from the very early days. I recall the wonderful experience I had here in the Dominican Republic in 1998. In June 2006 Jamaica hosted the 13th Caribbean Foresters meeting, the experience was a most fruitful one as we gained tremendous insight into the challenges and opportunities common to all our respective countries. Another added feature of the meeting was that friendships and partnerships were forged and several of those are still thriving. I know that this meeting will result in the forging of many new friendships, and new networking opportunities among Caribbean foresters, this is very important for us as a group. We must ensure that we keep in touch and not wait until the next CFM to contact our colleagues.

Today I want to use a few minutes to focus our attention on ***'Forestry in the Caribbean: under threat – A collaborative imperative'***

Ladies and gentlemen, everybody else in the world is finally recognizing what we foresters have known for a long time that sustainable forest management is critical to healthy lives and healthy economies. The forests

remain the lungs of the earth – on which we depend on for our very existence.

STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS

The Food and Agricultural Organisation in its 2012 ***State of the World's Forest*** Report indicated that forests currently cover about 4 billion hectares, about 31 percent of the earth's land surface. These areas, as outlined in the *FAO's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005; Fourth Assessment Report, 2007* provide approximately 1.6 billion people with food, medicines, fuel and other basic necessities and over two thirds of known land-based species live in forests. However as population and economic activity increase worldwide, our need to protect and conserve our forests has, in several instances, been diminished by national developmental imperatives, resulting in widescale deforestation. On a global level it is estimated that approximately 13 million hectares of forest is lost per year.

At the 10th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), held in Istanbul, Turkey in April 2013, the global community agreed that the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation are interrelated and are often socio-economic in nature. These causes include:

- Poverty;
- Lack of secure land tenure patterns;
- Inadequate recognition within national laws and jurisdiction of the rights and needs of forest-dependent indigenous and local communities;
- Inadequate cross-sectoral policies;
- Undervaluation of forest products and ecosystem services;
- Lack of participation;
- Lack of good governance;
- Absence of a supportive economic climate that facilitates sustainable forest management;
- Illegal trade;
- Lack of capacity;
- Lack of an enabling environment, at both the national and international levels;
- National policies that distort markets and encourage the conversion of forest land to other uses.

There is global acknowledgement of the causes of deforestation and possible approaches to managing them. Whilst there is no single global legal instrument in which forests are dealt with exclusively; the Non-Legally

Binding Instrument on all types of forests (NLBI) was adopted by the UNFF and the UN General Assembly in 2007. The purpose of the NLBI is to provide a framework for national action and international cooperation and to strengthen political commitment and action at all levels to implement effectively sustainable management of all types of forests and to achieve the shared global objectives on forests.

The four shared Global Objectives which were developed in 2006, provides clear guidance on the future work on the International Arrangement on Forests

They seek to:

1. Reverse the loss of Forest cover worldwide through Sustainable Forest Management, including protection, restoration, afforestation, reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation.
2. Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people.
3. Increase significantly the area of sustainably managed forests, including protected forests, and increase the proportion of forest products derived from sustainably managed forests.
4. Reverse the decline in Official Development Assistance for Sustainable Forest Management and mobilise significantly increased

new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of SFM.

In addition to the NLBI and the Global Objectives various aspects of forestry have been incorporated in other UN Conventions such as:

- Climate Change Convention
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Convention to Combat Desertification.

Other conventions of relevance are:

- Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
- World Heritage Convention
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
- Ozone Layer Convention
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention
- International Tropical Timber Agreement

Limited though they are, these conventions must be utilized to bring about change within our respective countries. We have to seek to halt deforestation and its effects which include the depletion of biodiversity by destroying habitat, interference with plant reproduction, the separation of contiguous areas of forests from each other, bringing some 8000 tree species or 9% of the total number of tree species worldwide close to

extinction. Deforestation is also responsible for contributing approximately 20% of annual greenhouse gas emissions precipitating the effects of climate change which include more warm days; more warm nights; fewer cool days, fewer cool nights; increase in the percentage of total annual rainfall coming from heavy rainfall; increase in the frequency, intensity and duration of the tropical storm and hurricanes and rising sea levels.

CARIBBEAN REALITY

Ladies and gentlemen as Caribbean states, these are important facts to note as they affect the foundation on which many of our economies are built. Our countries are homogenous in several respects; these include having a strong dependence on our respective tourism product. For many of our economies, including Jamaica, tourism is the #1 income/foreign exchange earner. Increasingly tourists are coming to our shores to enjoy a different type of tourism, one that is ecologically based, highlighting our unique flora and fauna and the largely undiscovered landscapes. There is great potential in this area, according to the International Ecotourism Society:

- Beginning in 1990s, ecotourism has been growing 20% - 34% per year
- In 2004, ecotourism/nature tourism was growing globally 3 times faster than the tourism industry as a whole.

- Nature tourism is growing at 10%-12% per annum in the international market.
- Sun-and-sand resort tourism has now “matured as a market” and its growth is projected to remain flat. In contrast, “experiential” tourism—which, encompasses ecotourism, nature, heritage, cultural, and soft adventure tourism, as well as sub-sectors such as rural and community tourism—is among the sectors expected to grow most quickly over the next two decades.
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Conservation International have indicated that most of tourism’s expansion is occurring in and around the world’s remaining natural areas.
- Sustainable tourism could grow to 25% of the world’s travel market within the next several years, taking the value of the sector to £250 billion (US\$473.6 billion) a year.
- Analysts predict a growth in eco-resorts and hotels, and a boom in nature

tourism — a sector already growing at 20% a year — and suggest that early converts to sustainable tourism will make market gains.

All these potential benefits are threatened by Climate Change. It is expected to shake the very foundation on which the region’s tourism and

evolving ecotourism industry are built. Climate change, in particular, is expected to impact on forest biodiversity and the ability of forests to provide soil and water protection, habitat for species and other ecosystem services. Forest ecosystems identified as being particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change include: mangroves, tropical forests, cloud forests and dry forests.

It doesn't seem we are able to escape the impact of deforestation, forest degradation and climate change. Increases in temperatures will be manifested with extremes in temperatures, increases in tropical cyclones (typhoons and hurricanes), droughts and floods making tourism destinations more vulnerable to natural disasters.

The stark reality is that sooner or later, the very sea and sand as we know them today may well soon disappear and the sun too hot for tourists to soak it up for any long periods.

The Caribbean homogeneity also extends to agriculture and its importance to many of our societies. Climate change and deforestation are already affecting our yields and the types of crops we are able to grow. Agricultural productivity and hence food and nutrition security will be significantly

impacted by climate change as critical components of the agro-ecosystem are being affected e.g. water, soil and pests.

International and local Response

Whilst forest management does not represent the panacea for climate change adaptation and the retention of our biological diversity, it has a significant role to play. There have been some positives that should be highlighted:

Public awareness – there has been considerable efforts being made to educate the global publics to various environmental issues such as climate change; global warming among others. The United Nations must also be commended for the organisation and promotion of the ‘International Year of Forests’ in 2011. This for me represented one of largest and possibly the first attempt by any international body to highlight forest protection and management as a global problem having local effects. This marked the biggest public education endeavor relating to the forest. Persons were able to see images of the devastation taking place in various regions of the world and more importantly how countries were seeking to mitigate the effects of deforestation. In general public education about the forest environment has grown by leaps and bounds over the last decade.

In addition, with many of our countries receiving grant funding from international donors, there is greater emphasis placed on public education. Many bilateral, multilateral and project agreements include a structured public education component. As environmental issues take centre stage, more Governments are required to put in place structured programmes to educate their citizens about the importance of forest conservation and preservation.

Participatory forestry – Globally there is a thrust towards community based and non-government organisation involvement in forestry. According to studies carried out by FAO and reported on by Caribbean Natural Resource Institute (CANARI), prior to 1997, there was no evidence of specific policy guidance on participatory forest management in any country of the insular Caribbean. However since that time many if not most countries have added components related to stakeholder participation to their policy and legislative framework. In Jamaica communities, especially those closest to the forest, are eager to participate in the establishment of Local Forest Management Committees (LFMC). This is fast becoming entrenched in forest management throughout the Caribbean. With a sense of ownership comes greater responsibility to protect and conserve. In Jamaica, the first LFMC was launched in 2000, there are 13 LFMCs formed

to date with several others in various stages of the process. This concept stresses sustainability and most communities are not averse to being able to earn an income from forest resources while guaranteeing that they will be there to serve other generations. The communities also assist with enforcement efforts – as additional “eyes and ears”.

Legislative framework -

Legislatively, the Caribbean states continue to move in the right direction. Many of our countries have legislation on sustainable forest management. Unfortunately too many of the laws are often neither applied nor sufficiently enforced due largely to lack of capacity both human and financial. Increasingly however, in the face of limited resources, some countries have opted for public/private partnerships in which supervision and control functions are delegated. In addition, several countries, through funding from international partners are reviewing their legislative framework to make them more responsive to changing environmental challenges. In Jamaica, my Agency with funding under the ACP-FLEGT Programme reviewed and updated the 2001 Forest Policy. The process involved a wide range of stakeholders who provided us with recommendations and comments which contributed significantly to the final draft. The policy draft was submitted to the Cabinet, we are awaiting the final approval. Following approval we will be initiating the process to revise the current Forest Act. It is anticipated

that at the end of the process, Jamaica will have an Act that is more effective. Other Caribbean countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, and Grenada are also revising or have recently revised their legislation. The ACP-FLEGT programme still has opportunities for funding available, each country should try and access these funds to assist update current legislation.

Regional Networking

There have been improved networking opportunities over the years, as seen in this meeting and other Caribbean Foresters meetings. The FAO Regional office has organised numerous regional foresters meetings which enables foresters in the region to meet and share ideas on various topics. CANARI has also played a very significant role in facilitating networking opportunities in the Caribbean, in participatory forest management and forest policy.

Words of Caution

I am fully aware that our respective Governments are committed to improving standards of living through economic growth for their citizens. Unfortunately over many decades, in spite of our collective efforts, development has negatively impacted our forests, as areas are cleared for housing, mining activities, road construction, hotel and the tourism industry among others. Undoubtedly development initiatives should and must be undertaken. What I would want to suggest is that Government's across the

region, consider using a “no-net-loss” approach to balancing growth and forest conservation. That is wherever there are trees that must be removed for developmental projects, other areas be identified and trees planted to compensate for the removal. Though not the ideal, it is a reasonable compromise. However, there are some forests in our respective countries that should NEVER be removed, because they cannot be replaced, e.g. the Cockpit Country in Jamaica. These forests we have to protect. We should solicit support from the NGOs, community groups and the general public to fight these battles. Some forests cannot be replaced.

As international attention turns towards the ramification of environmental degradation and catch phrases such as climate change and global warming take centre stage in negotiations, our policy and decision makers sometimes inadvertently forget that forest management and reforestation are linked to many of the environmental problems. With so many sectors getting involved in the climate change discussions, we may be losing focus of the root cause of many of the problems – deforestation. We should not allow this to happen or to continue. Therefore it is important that we, through our various public awareness and education programmes, promote the relevance of our work and link it to real issues such as national development, risk management, climate and disaster mitigation.

The Way Forward

As we move forward as a region, there are regional imperatives that must be followed. First there has to be greater synergies among our countries in respect to the sharing of experiences, research and general information. Based on the homogeneity of the region, each country can benefit from the lessons learnt from its neighbor. The synergies must exist not only at the level of administrations or Governments but also at the academic and institutional levels. Where regional institutions exist, governments and interest groups must be willing to provide funding to assist in strengthening these organisations to meet the growing informational and technical needs of countries across the region. Ladies and gentlemen we are being forced to attend to our own needs therefore creative ways and means must be employed to do so in the face of economic challenges.

I would want to suggest that greater independent funding be available to undertake general public awareness. What we need is to be able to, with a sound plan, tap into funding to undertake public education campaigns on any environmental issue and other forest related activities. We should not only focus on seeking International funding, we have to get private companies to become much more involved in our forestry programmes. Get them to move from just including the word “Green” in their tagline, to actually plant some trees, protecting our remaining forests or sponsoring our public awareness activities. The petroleum companies in Trinidad and Tobago have been tapped, we need more examples of these companies in other countries.

Finally, in improving our networking capabilities we must consider negotiating as a Caribbean group in all future UNFF sessions. This would be much more beneficial to us as a group we would have a stronger position on matters which are important to us.

In conclusion, I am suggesting that a collaborative approach to forest management be the bedrock of all activities geared towards forest protection and conservation. Failure to create the delicate balance between development and sustainable forestry will result in the devastation of many of our economies. Public education is a key component and increased funding should be allocated to making citizens aware of their environment and the impact of their activities on their lives and the lives of the future generation.

Good luck in your endeavors.

Thank you!