

**Address by Mr Jouni Lind, State Secretary  
of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland,  
at the Pan-European workshop  
“Forests in the changing environment”**

**Koli, Finland 3 September 2008**

Dear Participants and Experts,

It is a great pleasure for me to give the opening statement at this workshop “Forests in the changing environment”. The issues on the agenda are very topical indeed.

First, I wish to warmly welcome you all to Finland and to Koli. The venue of the workshop, the rugged hill of Koli, offers you probably the best-known view in Finland. Koli has been a meeting point between eastern and western cultures for hundreds of years. It has been a sacred place, where local people have come to make sacrifices and pray to the gods for success in the hunt. In the past, slash-and-burn cultivation was practiced in the area. Our national composer Jean Sibelius, painter Eero Järnefelt and many others visited Koli to find inspiration from the typical Finnish natural environment, wildlife and culture. Nowadays, Koli is the heart of a National Park covering a total of 3000 hectares of very rich landscape. I believe that Koli connects extremely well with the themes of this workshop.

Let me remind you about the background of this workshop. Our Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Sirkka-Liisa Anttila, proposed this pan-European workshop in Warsaw in 2007. This is a regional contribution to the United Nations Forum on Forest, and it is an integral part of the work programme of the MCPFE. The results of your work will be shared widely within Europe and globally. I hope that your work will pave the way for a substantive outcome at the eight session of the UNFF next year.

The UNFF8 and this workshop have three major themes:

- (i) Forests and climate change;
- (ii) The loss of forest cover, forest degradation and combating desertification;  
and
- (iii) Forests and biodiversity conservation, including protected areas.

These challenges mean that the forest sector, experts and institutions must truly address these issues and work in close collaboration with other sectors and institutions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

During your deliberations at the workshop, I wish to encourage you to consider, for example, the following questions:

- What are the most important issues to be addressed at the UNFF8?
- What should be done on these issues?
- What would be the role of the UNFF and the NLBI in furthering these issues?

But, we also have to go beyond the UNFF8 session. The key is what can be done to address these serious challenges and to make better use of the great opportunities offered by forests. For example, in the context of the climate negotiations, countries are exploring the means to reduce emissions resulting from deforestation and forest degradation under the so-called REDD mechanism. I believe that deep and far-reaching policy reforms are required in countries and regions in order to ensure long-term effectiveness of the actions taken. Policy changes need to address issues like governance, sustainable forest management, conservation of forest biological diversity, land use, water and soil protection, and production and consumption of forest goods and services. We have to go beyond providing only financial compensation to the developing countries for reduced deforestation. Does the NLBI provide a framework for universally accepted forest-related policies and measures and, therefore, a valuable input to climate discussions?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now I wish to say a few words about the Finnish forest policy. The key policy framework in Finland has been the National Forest Programmes, which have been prepared and implemented since 1993 in accordance with the principles and decisions adopted at the Rio Conference and in accordance with the MCPFE Resolutions. The Government approved the National Forest Programme 2015 as a Government Resolution in March this year, simultaneously with the Resolution on the Forest Biodiversity Programme for Southern Finland (METSO) 2008 – 2016. You will have a more in-depth presentation on the METSO programme on Thursday evening.

The purpose of the National Forest Programme 2015 is to increase welfare from diverse forests. Our vision for the year 2015 is that Finland is still a world pioneer in sustainable forest management, the competence of the sector has been refined into new competitive products and services, the use of domestic wood has increased significantly, and forest biodiversity has improved. The Programme is built on six priorities:

- Securing a competitive operating environment for the forest industry and forest management;
- Enhancing the climate- and energy-related benefits of forests;
- Protecting the biological diversity and environmental benefits of forests;
- Promoting the use of forests as a source of culture and recreation;
- Strengthening skills, expertise and acceptability of the forest sector;
- Promoting sustainable forest management in international forest policy.

Each priority has its own objectives and measures. In international contexts the Finnish Programme has been considered to set an excellent example, especially due to the diversified content and broadly-based and participatory preparation and implementation processes. I believe that our National Forest Programme, together with the METSO Programme, is an excellent way to address forest issues in the changing environment at the national level.

Finally,

I wish to thank all those who have contributed to the organization of the workshop: our friends in the Liaison Unit Oslo, members of the Steering Group, the UNFF Secretariat, keynote speakers, our colleagues in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry of the Environment, dedicated staff within our Ministry, and many others.

To you all, experts from Europe and abroad, I wish a successful workshop and a pleasant stay in Koli.

Thank you!