



World Forestry Congress 2015
7th-11th September 2015, Durban (South Africa)



WFC2015
XIV World Forestry Congress

Forests and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future



IFSA Delegation Report

**Eline Schothorst, Andrea Vasquez, Eva von Schönebeck, Melanie Schulte
20.12.2015**





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Background of conference

The World Forestry Congress (WFC) is organized every six years by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It is one of the largest gatherings of the Forestry Sector. Scientists, politicians and forestry companies come together to discuss hot topics in the field of forestry and other related fields, such as land use, hydrology and biodiversity. The responsibility for the organization of the congress lies with the government of the host country in cooperation with FAO.

The XIV World Forestry Congress was organized by the South African ministry of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. It was the first time ever that this conference was held on the African continent. The theme of the congress was 'Forests and people: investing in a sustainable future'. There was a special emphasis on the UN Sustainable Development Summit, that was held only 2 weeks after the WFC in New York and the COP21 that will be held in Paris later this year. Because of this, there were three outcome documents for the congress; The Durban Declaration (general outcome), a message on climate change and a message to the United Nations General Assembly. For more information visit the website of the XIV World Forestry Congress:

<http://webapps.daff.gov.za/wfc2015/>

For the first time youth was granted a special focus during the congress. A special youth team was set up by FAO to guide the youth delegation and organize a Special Youth Event. On this youth event, three young persons had the chance to tell the world about their youth initiative on forests. These people were chosen by the youth initiative video competition. For more information visit the special youth blog for the event (<https://forests2015.wordpress.com/2015/05/07/wanted-young-passionate-people-to-speak-at-world-forestry-congress/>). During the Special Youth Event the winner of the blog competition and the photo competition were also announced. More events were organized by and for the youth, such as a flash mob and a youth beach party.

The IFSA was proud to have one of its members presenting her youth initiative during the Special Youth Event and many more IFSA members participated in the youth initiative video competition or the blog competition. Together with IUFRO, IFSA also organized a pre-congress workshop on Forestry Education in Africa. The results of this workshop were presented in a joint Side Event of IUFRO and IFSA on Forestry Education in Africa (see pictures below).

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FORESTRY EDUCATION SIDE EVENT AND WORKSHOP



Picture taken by Melanie Schulte



Picture taken by Rene Kaam

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During the World Forestry Congress the Memorandum of Understanding between FAO and IFSA was renewed and signed. FAO was already an official partner of the IFSA. This relationship will keep on standing for the following years. The IFSA delegation and especially the LO FAO and present members of the board fostered this relationship during the congress and will keep on doing so.

PICTURE OF MOU SIGNATURE



Picture taken by Rene Kaam



IFSA participation

IFSA was represented with a delegation of 26 participants from 13 Nations including Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Austria, Germany, Serbia, Sweden, Peru, the Netherlands and Indonesia. As mentioned before, Youth participation was highly supported by the Organizing Committee of the Congress and IFSA played a main and active role with such a big and diverse delegation. There were no restrictions on the number of delegates by the Organizer of the Congress and thus IFSA delegates formed one of the biggest Youth delegations to the Congress.

YOUTH FLASHMOB



Picture from FAO flickr

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Core and daily agendas

Pre-congress events:

- Workshop on Forestry Education
- Special Youth workshop

Sessions every day:

- Plenary session
- every day sub theme sessions
- during lunch, afternoon and evening: side events
- special events
 - special youth event
 - Forests and Water dialogue
 - Wildlife forum

important Youth side events:

- side event on forestry education in africa
- Workshop on building bridges
- Workshop to write youth statement
- youth workshop 'the way forward'

Sunday 6 September	Monday 7 September	Tuesday 8 September	Wednesday 9 September	Thursday 10 September	Friday 11 September
	Opening ceremony (1h30)	Plenary session (1h30)	Plenary session (1h30)		The Way Forward (3h)
Pre-Congress events	High-level dialogue on global forest agenda (1h30)	Sub-theme dialogues (2h) 1 2 3 4 5 6	Poster sessions Sub-theme dialogues (2h) 1 2 3 4 5 6	Special event: Innovation and Investment Forum (3h)	Joint event: Climate financing for the Future (1h)
	Side events and partner meetings (1h30)	Side events and partner meetings (1h30)	Side events and partner meetings (1h30)	Special event: Forests and Climate Change Event (3h)	
Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)	Global Forest Resources Assessment launch (0h20)	Special event: Africa Day (2h)	Sub-theme dialogues (1h45) 1 2 3 4 5 6	Joint event: Climate financing for the Future (1h)	Side events and partner meetings (1h30)
	Plenary session (1h45)			Special event: More than heat! Wood energy for the future (2h)	
Welcome cocktail	Sub-theme dialogues (2h) 1 2 3 4 5 6	Side events and partner meetings (1h15)	Side events and partner meetings (1h15)	Poster sessions	Side events and partner meetings (1h30)
	Side events and partner meetings (1h15)			Side events and partner meetings (1h15)	
				Business Networking Event (1h30)	Side events and partner meetings (1h30)
				Plenary session Input from sub-themes (2h)	Recommendations & key messages
				CPF Wangari Maathai Award (1h)	Closing ceremony (2h)
				Closing dinner	



Impressions about the High-level dialogue—Forests are vital for implementing the post-2005 developing agenda

By Andrea Vasquez Fernandez

Chair: Hosny El-Lakany, Monday 7th, 11:00 - 12:30

Some points addressed in the session were:

1. Forestry and other land uses; Good governance
2. Forests and poverty eradication; food, water and energy needs; combating desertification; conserving biodiversity
3. Forests and the post-2015 development agenda and COP21
4. Forests and indigenous and local peoples, and sustainable, use of wood energy
5. Community-based sustainable forest management
6. Role for forests in climate-change mitigation and adaptation; Investment in forests
7. Global Forest Resources Assessment
8. Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation
9. Forestry and cross sectoral approach

Most of the panelist gave similar statements started their speeches articulating what where their countries achievements. Most of those achievements were similar between countries, however, some delegates mentioned different ideas. For instance, Mr. Djombo said that there is are no action-lead policies, there are no meaningful mechanisms to implement those policies, and there is the need to forestry institutions be restructure. Ghana's delegate mentioned about forest's cultural benefits, the importance to ensure food security and less dependence on importation of food. Also he mentioned that it is a challenge to implement policies that are non-binding. Mr. Nathael Barbe (Deputy Chief Director for Forest and Agriculture in France was additional guest panelist) mentioned that forests are in the heart of climates change and urge to governments for an adoption of an agenda with concrete mechanisms to address deforestation.

The chair concluded the session with some remarks highlighting the importance of: Integrating forest more broadly in the SDGs; Developing synergies with other sectors for instance urban development, energy, agriculture, etc.; Stakeholders and civil society engagement; Address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; Investment in secure technology, micro enterprises, training (specially in communities), forest education, research and innovation

My personal expectation was higher comparing with the outcomes of the session. Seems that these high level conversations are not very productive or action lead, and limited by national and international politics. The speeches contained some contradictions and generalizations, for instance calling, "poor people" to all local and indigenous peoples (and generalizing that statement) and in the second sentence say that there is a need for empowerment of local and indigenous peoples.



IFSA side-events

- IFSA-IUFRO Pre-Congress-Workshop “Enhancing Forestry Education in Africa”
- IFSA-IUFRO Side-Event “Enhancing Forestry Education in Africa”
- Contribution to the Youth Declaration
- Participation in the Youth Special Event
- Youth Booth of IFSA, YPARD and IAAS
- Participation in the Youth Flash Mob
- Renewal of the MoU with FAO

Enhancing forestry education in Africa:

This side-event was created to elaborate the weaknesses in African forestry education and to find solutions for better outcomes. The problems were identified by IFSA and Non-IFSA students during the pre-congress-workshop in small groups. For each detected challenge the students worked out concrete solutions to be presented during the side-event. Afterwards the outcomes of this workshop were debated during a panel discussion with representatives from FAO (Dominique Reeb), IUFRO (Mike Wingfield), IFSA (Tatenda Mapeto and Brendan Marais), SAIF (Paxie Chirwa) and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (Willie Louw).

Special Youth Event:

This event was organized by young people for young people to bring the perspectives of Youth as a topic to the Congress. In the beginning of the event, Tiina Vahanen (Associated Secretary General of the WFC) and Gerald Steinlegger gave, among others, inspiring welcome speeches, before they handed over to the moderator Matt Frei (BBC). The three Youth representatives (Sekar Ayu Woro Yunita (Youth in Forest Actions), Charles Batte (Tree Adoption Uganda) and Jossio Guillén (Reforestation Initiative Central America)) had the chance to give a “tree talk”. This was a 6 minutes speech in the TEDx-style about their projects, followed by two indigenous women from South Africa who performed on intergenerational knowledge transfer. In the end a panel discussion with different stakeholders related to youth or education and forestry was moderated by Matt Frei. The participants debated about the most important forestry issues that impact Youth and to find ideas to create a way forward.

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Pre Congress Youth Workshop:

A day before the WFC started an event to join in youth for the congress and build capacity took place. Within this, speakers presented strategies how to make the most of a congress and techniques for successful networking and reporting were practiced. The notetaking teams were formed in the end and everyone got to know each other within the team.

The Way Forward:

During the last day many “the way forward” events took place covering different subjects. One of them was the youth way forward. In the first part of the event participants were urged to give feedback on the congress from a youth perspective in smaller groups and present the outcomes. They were also asked to share their opinions on the idea of a mentoring programme developed by the FAO. The event ended in an open discussion, not just for youth, on mentoring and experiences with mentoring.

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Delegate feedback

During the short time of the Congress, the schedule was tight and days were long. Although the overall consensus was that the WFC was a little bit chaotic in its organization everybody enjoyed the week and experienced a lot more than expected:

“I thought the world congress was going to be forestry based, but it was more than what I expected, it was very broad and it covered most of the topics that are forestry related such as sustainable forest management, forest protection and the role of forestry in climate change and the ones that have impact on forestry sectors which include the impact of climate change in forest, land restitution, innovation of technology in forestry, involvement of community forests being integrated with forestry sectors.” Thabo D., South Africa

“My greatest experience were the youth workshops. In these workshops I had the feeling that we as youth (and I) were playing an active role in the forestry congress and that we could make a contribution to the world of forestry (education). Other nice experiences were the special youth event, opening dinner and just talking to people.” Eline, the Netherlands

“The world is starting to realize the importance of forests in the Anthropocene, however as forest custodians or as professional working in forests and forests related organizations we have to meet the world and come of the woods, and acknowledge that the traditional role of forests as wood and fiber sinks have been added on to, with the world realizing forests for so much more than what we as foresters are doing. Forestry is not about forests only anymore, and there is so much opportunity for an industry like ours to grow.” Tatenda, Zimbabwe

“These kind of events does not really have any strong political power, but the main positive outcome is that people get together and network, talk to one another face to face.” Joakim, Sweden

“The greatest things I learned were networking and communicating. Although communicating sounds quite vague, I learned that communicating in the right way is one of the most important skills you can possess to achieve something.” Eline, the Netherlands

“I learnt that forestry in Africa requires plenty of attention, especially from people in authoritarian positions who are supportive of forestry for the correct reasons. I also learnt that in some cases politicians who are making decisions for (and against) forestry are not foresters to start off with. They also exhibit blatant ulterior motives throughout the decision-making process while at the same time showing very little understanding of forestry's true potential for social, economic, and environmental upliftment. We have a great deal to learn from countries that regard forestry as a powerful economic asset and we should in fact welcome suggestions from them. Forestry, and forestry as a suitable career option requires extensive exposure with today's youth in order to bring about changes in attitude towards the environment and sustainability as a whole.” Brendan, South Africa

“It was a great event with a great youth involvement. There were so many opportunities to learn, meet new people and get in contact with potential employer. The youth involvement itself took place in many different events, which were not just for youth so an intergenerational exchange was possible. Youth also had the opportunity write their own statement and give a feedback.” Eva, Germany



Outcomes, and recommendations for future IFSA delegations and involvement

- apply good communication strategies: the whatsapp-group during the congress worked quite well and was established to give updates about interesting events and reminders for important events to attend or tasks to accomplish. Although communication between the IFSA delegation was evaluated as quite good, some would have wished more information before the congress about the programme, hot topics etc. (but some say that this task should be overtaken by the responsible delegate her-/himself). So a good advice would be to provide the delegation with helpful links to the needed information
- Youth activities and involvement: We had a lot of youth activities during the WFC. Some were really good organized and some felt like last-minute-options. On one hand, this is a very good opportunity to show our presence and make our voice heard. On the other hand, this means lots of organizational efforts and some of the delegates wondered if it would have been better to focus in less activities but organize them better and way bigger. But this depends on the conference, the schedule, the size of the delegation and if other Youth organizations are present so that they can also be involved in activities if needed.
- there were a lot of possibilities to connect better with our partners. During the IFSA-IUFRO- Events we also invited FAO to participate and during on of these events the MoU was signed. FAO also invited May Anne (IFSA President), Tatenda (Head of Forestry Education Commission), Lena (Head of IFSA-IUFRO Joint Taks force on Forestry Education), Andre (IFSA-IUFRO Joint Position) and Melanie (Liaison Officer to FAO) to participate in the Advisory Panel on Forestry Knowledge session during the Congress.

Closing

Overall the Delegates had a great time during the Congress and gained a lot of knowledge about forests and their stakeholders but also about IFSA itself and the initiatives of IFSA members and Local Committees around the world. But it was more than that. Youth was given a loud voice during the Congress with great side-events and even the big Special Youth Event. This involvement and engagement of Youth went along (and most importantly – needs to continue!) with the quote of Yemi Adeyeye, FAO Youth Liaison Officer and former IFSA member: “Youth involvement is not negotiable”.