

## Forest Development: A vital balance - what did it mean for New Zealand?

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A number of New Zealand representatives attended the 13<sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress ([www.wfc2009.org](http://www.wfc2009.org)) in Buenos Aires in October 2009 including our Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Hon. David Carter<sup>1</sup>, senior members from the forestry sector, MAF, and a number of scientists and forestry practitioners. The Congress, held under the auspices of FAO and the Argentine Government as hosts was huge with more than 7000 delegates over the week. The programme was broad and diverse with something for everyone. Presentations<sup>2</sup> can be seen on the Congress web site, and video clips on YouTube<sup>3</sup>. Representatives from all walks of forestry attended with very diverse viewpoints and interests.

I attended to make a number of presentations on Sustainable Forest Management, and while there was invited to chair the drafting committee for the development of the Declaration of the Congress. The declaration is the summary of the really key findings from the Congress and stands as the record for each congress.

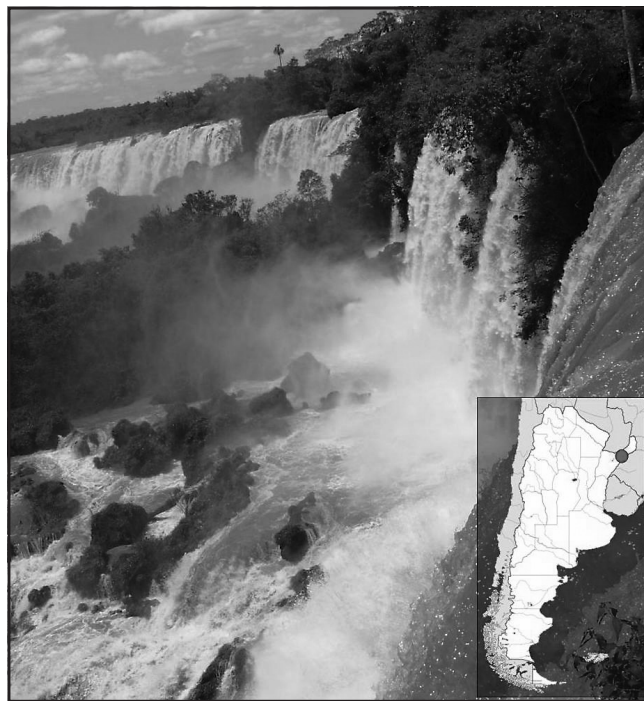
The drafting process involved the committee reviewing the summary notes from chairs of each of the many parallel sessions after each day's sessions, extracting the key points and developing a concise overview of the main findings and was a complex and fascinating task which was surprisingly successful given the variety and volume of information. The final Declaration<sup>4</sup> contained 9 findings and 27 strategic actions which will inform activities internationally in the period leading up to the next World Congress in 2016, either in India or South Africa. There are a number of analyses of the Congress available also<sup>5,6</sup>.

So what might it mean for New Zealand? A number of key findings from the Congress resonated for me and either reflect the thinking in New Zealand or reflect changes that may have an impact on New Zealand and our forests. Given the magnitude of some of the global issues affecting the world and forests specifically I felt that we are in pretty good shape and well down the track in managing our forests sustainably compared to others who face huge challenges.

A few quotes from the Declaration give a flavour of some of the key points that I think are very relevant to New Zealand.

### Cross sectoral activities

*'For too long, the discussion of forest issues has been limited to people within the forest sector. Although this has resulted in substantial improvements, including forest productivity, health, and diversity, it is now time for a more*



Iguazu Falls - Argentina

*inclusive approach to address the challenges that lie ahead. Today, the major pressures on forests are arising from outside the forest sector, such as changes in global climates, economic conditions, and population. These changes are creating impacts across multiple sectors'..... 'The path forward lies in shifting to an integrated landscape approach for confronting these changes, working with partners outside the forest sector to develop sustainable multi-sector responses'*

### Ecosystem services

*'The broader perspective that forests produce services of economic and environmental value to society, such as clean water, biodiversity and carbon sequestration, has not been fully recognized and realized to date'.... 'Foster the development of mechanisms at local regional, national and global levels for realizing new economic values of forests that create financial incentives for landowners and communities to manage for these values'.*

### Planted forests

*With a growing global population and demand for natural resources, planted forests will become an increasingly important part of the landscape along with cities and towns, agricultural lands, and natural forests. These planted forests provide the opportunity to produce more goods and services from less land as well as effectively contribute to climate change*

mitigation, degraded land restoration and other environmental benefits'.... 'Recognize the importance of planted forests in meeting economic, social and environmental needs'.

## Energy

'Sustainable development requires sustainable energy supplies. Forests are an important part of the solution'.... 'Well-managed forests, both native and planted, will be vital as a sustainable supply of biomass'..... 'Forest biomass is increasingly seen as an alternative feedstock to fossil fuels for commercial energy production'.....'Develop energy forests within the context of a sustainability framework to minimize the risk of unintended consequences across the forest, agriculture and energy sectors'.

## Economic Engines

'After many years of lack of support this Congress recognized a thriving forest industry sector as important due to the economic and social benefits it provides and its potential in the area of clean technologies'..... 'Creating enabling policy environments that promote investment in clean technologies and the necessary infrastructure for efficient and environmentally responsible wood harvesting and processing are essential to achieve sustainable development goals'.

New Zealand has certainly recognised over many years the importance of planted forests and a thriving forest industry sector, though I'm not sure we have made the most of developing the 'enabling environments' the Declaration alludes to. We are certainly also looking at forests for more

than just timber - we have long recognised ecosystem services as valuable, for instance for erosion control, but apart from a very slowly emerging carbon market we are at the very early stages with respect to being able to realise actual dollars from these services.

Cross sectoral approaches on issues of national concern have been a failing in New Zealand generally over the years - the forestry sector works separately to horticulture which in turn does not work with sheep and beef or dairy. Cross sectoral initiatives must be a priority for us in the future. If we are to do anything to address our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, water allocation issues, or bioenergy opportunities, and if we feel forests are part of this we will have to engage with wider society. We can take a lead from the Declaration on this and maybe this could form the foundation of a set of goals for the forest sector that might bring major benefit to New Zealand as a whole (and the sector of course).

One concrete goal could be to develop a Primary Sector Sustainable Land Management forum where the forestry sector brings its Sustainable Forest Management expertise to the table and shares its experiences<sup>7, 8, 9, 10</sup> with other sectors.

All in all the Congress was a great experience, it showed me again how big the world is, put a lot of our work in a better context, and opened my eyes to a number of new ideas which are on the horizon and which may pop up on New Zealand's forestry radar screen in the future. The full declaration is well worth a read and does give a great view of where forestry is globally. It's up to us to make the most of what we have learnt.

## Footnotes

Links are provided below to assist readers' access to documents.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/keynote+address+world+forestry+congress>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cfm2009.org/es/programapost/resumenenes/resumenenesen.asp>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKKFZKRA2JM>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cfm2009.org/en/seccion.asp?IdSeccion=161>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.vector1media.com/articles/features/10889-world-forestry-at-the-crossroads-going-it-alone-or-joining-with-others>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/forest/wfc13/html/ymbvol10num18e.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.nzfoa.org.nz/index.php?/File\\_libraries\\_resources/Standards\\_guidelines/A\\_National\\_Industry\\_Standard\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Plantation\\_Forest\\_Management](http://www.nzfoa.org.nz/index.php?/File_libraries_resources/Standards_guidelines/A_National_Industry_Standard_for_Sustainable_Plantation_Forest_Management)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/publications/2008-nz-report-montreal-process/index.htm>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.nzfoa.org.nz/index.php?/File\\_libraries\\_resources/Agreements\\_Accords/New\\_Zealand\\_Forest\\_Accord](http://www.nzfoa.org.nz/index.php?/File_libraries_resources/Agreements_Accords/New_Zealand_Forest_Accord)

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.nzfoa.org.nz/index.php?/File\\_libraries\\_resources/Standards\\_guidelines/Environmental\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice](http://www.nzfoa.org.nz/index.php?/File_libraries_resources/Standards_guidelines/Environmental_Code_of_Practice)