

## Welcoming Remarks by Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> World Agroforestry Congress

**Nairobi, 24 August 2009**—The Vice President of Kenya, Honourable ministers, Nobel Prize laureate Wangari Maathai, Director General of the World Agroforestry Centre, co-host and neighbour, Dennis Garrity, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Agroforestry Congress being held here at the UN Office at Nairobi and jointly hosted by the World Agroforestry Centre and UNEP.

The theme '*Agroforestry-The Future of Global Land Use*' echoes to the challenges but also opportunities of our time.

How do we, in a world of more than six billion people rising to perhaps over nine billion, feed everyone while simultaneously securing the ecosystem services such as forests and wetlands that underpin agriculture, and indeed life itself in the first place?

And how do we achieve all this while also overcoming poverty, generating decent jobs for the 1.3 billion under-employed or unemployed and combating the greatest challenge of this generation—climate change.

Sometimes you have to think small to think big.

Humanity all too often thinks in boxes rather than in complexity—thinks keeping it simple rather than using a systems approach is the best way forward.

There are those who look for silver bullets—nuclear power and genetically modified organisms, might be two examples.

Others might wish to consign modern scientific and technological knowledge to the dustbin and seek to turn back the clock to some kind of ideological or mythical rural idyll.

Ladies and gentlemen, the sustainability challenges we are confronted with today will not be amenable to such polarized approaches.

We must take the best of the indigenous, traditional and farmers knowledge, forged over centuries of trial and error, and submit it to empirical, scientific and rigorous evaluation.

We must also put our modern, technological prowess under a fresh lens and more wide-ranging scrutiny.

It must be subject to broader cost benefit analysis alongside delivering a wider suite of societal and environmental goals.

Above all we must bring the best of these worlds together and deploy them in both an integrated and flexible way that recognizes the different circumstances and conditions of the communities they serve.

Agroforestry is in many ways a shining example of this approach, merging centuries-old knowledge with modern science in a systems-led approach—and the concept of thinking small-scale to achieve potentially big and transformative outcomes.

Indeed agroforestry's relevance to sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has in many ways come of age in part through the lens of climate change.

In just over 100 days from now, governments will gather in Copenhagen, Denmark for the crucial UN climate convention meeting.

The UN's slogan in the run up is Seal the Deal.

Some people ask what deal, or what are the elements of a serious, meaningful and transformative deal to seal?

Well let me say that for sure forestry needs to be an important element--the proposal for financing Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) needs to be a key plank of the final package this December in Copenhagen.

Up to 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions are from deforestation and forest degradation and without economic incentives to reverse the trend, the emission levels will continue to rise.

This will challenge all our efforts in terms of cleaner, renewable energy up to more energy efficient buildings and transportation networks.

However, simply locking away forests to secure their carbon as if they are the Queen's jewels, or putting up the modern equivalent of a Berlin Wall between forests and people, is almost certainly folly and almost certainly a recipe for disaster.

REDD should and must reflect the genuine needs of the surrounding communities including indigenous peoples.

UNEP, in collaboration with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN and the UN Development Programme and with funding from Norway, are spearheading the UN REDD programme with nine pilot countries.

There are several issues that need to be resolved, from verification and monitoring of forests to how to manage payment systems—but also the role and rights of communities and their share in the financial flows.

But if REDD can be up and running it may not only be good for combating climate change, but also for generating new revenue flows from North to South.

Also good for accelerating adaptation in terms of improving the health of water supplies, nutrient flows, soil stabilization and job creation in areas such as natural resource management.

The returns are potentially enormous and wide-ranging.

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), an initiative of the G8+5 of which UNEP is the secretariat, says an investment of just \$45 billion in protected areas alone—many of which are forested areas-- could secure nature-based services worth some \$5 trillion a year.

Agroforestry may have many roles to play in this new landscape of rewarding countries for their natural or nature-based services.

Firstly it offers the potential for maximizing sustainable food production in the zones surrounding natural forests while also boosting biodiversity and other 'natural infrastructure'.

Secondly, it offers an opportunity for timber production and thus alternative livelihoods to meet perhaps a supply gap that may emerge under a fully-fledged REDD regime.

Thirdly these agroforestry areas can also potentially secure flows from carbon finance in their own right.

- Under the existing agreements of the Kyoto Protocol as afforestation or re-afforestation projects.
- Under what one might call carbon farming

It seems that if REDD can be agreed, it can open the door to even more creative carbon payments for improved land management elsewhere including on farms; in peatland areas and in coastal zones such as mangrove forests and perhaps one day even the oceans themselves.

I am delighted that the World Agroforestry Centre and UNEP, with funding from the Global Environment Facility and in collaboration with a broad alliance of academic institutions, are pressing ahead here.

Only some months ago, we launched the Carbon Benefits Project with an initial focus on communities in the catchments of Lake Victoria, Niger-Nigeria and China.

The missing link is a standardized way of assessing how much carbon is actually locked away in vegetation and in soils under different land management regimes.

This is the goal of the project and we anticipate preliminary findings within 18 months.

In terms of afforestation and reforestation under the existing Kyoto Protocol, UNEP would be keen to learn why less than one per cent of existing Clean Development Mechanism projects involve such initiatives.

One area that needs to be explored is insurance—the insurance industry manages risk reasonably well for timber plantations, but seems less well geared to natural forests or farmland ones.

An issue that came to fore last December at the UN climate convention meeting in Poznan where UNEP's Finance Initiative convened a discussion among insurers.

The role of organic agriculture within farming but also agroforestry systems has also emerged as an area of genuine debate in recent months.

It follows a survey by UNEP and the UN Conference on Trade and Development. The survey, of 114 agricultural projects in 24 countries, shows that yields are often more than double where organic (or near organic) small-scale farming methods are used.

The increase in yield in East Africa was well over 120 per cent.

A University of Michigan study showed up to 3 times productivity from organic methods in comparison to other practices, in developing countries.

I mention this, not because I am ideologically in favour of organic food production.

But, as with agroforestry and other forms of sustainable agriculture, we are often force fed points of view from one set of powerful vested interests.

The reality on the ground for the less politically and financially powerful can be quite different.

And there are other possibilities which are in need of increased research and development, such as perennial crops.

Experts suggest that 'moving back to the future' to these kinds of multi-year crops with deep roots can also boost soil fertility and stability 50-fold while assisting in adapting to climate change

Perennial crops are also 50 per cent better at carbon capture and storage than their annual cousins, according to some estimates.

Because they do not need to be planted every year, they use less farm machinery and require fewer inputs - reducing greenhouse gas emissions further.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure there are many, many other issues that will engage you all over the next few days of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Agroforestry Congress.

The world is looking as never before for solutions—lets put them on the table and in the in-trays of the policymakers in the run up to Copenhagen and beyond.

In response to the food, fuel, financial and economic crises UNEP launched its Global Green New Deal-Green Economy initiative.

The basic concept is that in order to meet current and future challenges, every dollar, Euro, shilling, Yuan and Rupee needs to work on multiple fronts in order to deliver sustainability.

Agroforestry, with its multiple benefits, is very much a part of this transition to a low carbon resource efficient economic future—one able to meet the needs but also the aspirations of communities and countries across the globe.

That is why UNEP is delighted to co-host this important event and why we are equally delighted that all of you are here to make that transition a reality.

One that merges centuries of knowledge with modern scientific methods—that can turn the challenges facing millions of small-scale farmers into one big opportunity for human-kind.

The future of global land use is no longer just about land—its is about the future of the atmosphere and of biodiversity and of water, fuel and food.

Overall it is about choosing a future of accelerating poverty or one that puts poverty on the run and prosperity into the cockpit and driving seat.

In short it is part of the complexity rather than reductionist simplicity that humanity urgently needs to embrace and to more intelligently manage if it is to survive and to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thank you