

IFSA in the XIII World Forestry Congress 2009

7075 participants from over 160 countries gathered at the XIII World Forestry Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 18-23 Oct, 2009 to explore the theme of the Congress, "Forest Development: A Vital Balance".

This stature of an event was very important for students to participate in and IFSA was primarily responsible to give students this chance to act, inform and learn about the overall aspects of present day forestry sector. Changes in the forestry sector affecting multiple actors, and stakeholders globally were discussed in majorly all sessions of this congress. IFSA initiated organising the Forestry Education session along with the partner organisations like IPFE (International Partnership for Forestry Education), IUFRO (International Union of Forestry Research Organisations), SilvaNetwork and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

Promotion of forestry education could not have taken place in a better forum than this congress, and it was acknowledged that students are a vital part of this present day scenario of decision making and implementing them on a ground reality. The forestry education session received information on such developments in various countries and institutions worldwide. Information was shared on the research related to the status of forestry education in many countries. It was a marked outcome that IFSA is playing a key role in stimulating the change in forestry education. Participants supported the development of forestry education and professional networks, which will ensure the right decisions to be taken by different government institutions and policy makers and enhance the chances of appropriate communication and implementation. At this congress students proposed a holistic transformation where new roles of forestry can be incorporated into the curricula. Development of new programmes and strict review of the existing ones, consideration of the job market scenario are currently the key suggestions given by the students. Even teaching the roles of forests and trees from the primary school level of education was one of the chief needs as stated by IFSA. Furthermore, a draft framework for a Global Action Plan for Forestry Education was shared and appreciated in this congress, where improvement of the image of forestry and raising the global professional competence in this sector was urged.

During the initial days of the congress, the students attended numerous other sessions covering all the vital aspects of the current forestry sector ranging from climate change to development activities to new and transformed management options and enhancement of forest productivity holistically balanced with conservation and sustainable development of forests as the most important natural resource. Students coming from different backgrounds and specialisations of forestry sector with different level of education helped to connect and share numerous issues needing immediate attention. Examples from different countries were interesting and promising for the future developmental activities. There were regular formal and informal meetings and discussions to know the global scenario of forestry. This exchange of information and the platform of this congress helped students to strengthen their knowledge, promoted intercultural communication and also developed their professional competence and network. Internationally renowned speakers, officials, eminent researchers and representatives from different academic institutions, environmentalists, panellists, policy makers, government bodies, technical experts, forest management personnel, non governmental organisations, institutions voicing rural and indigenous people included this one week of integrated presentations, discussions, exhibitions and parallel events that served a whole array of different views, ideas and knowledge for the students

to participate and learn. Even proper and thoughtful inclusion of cultural events and depiction of traditional art and culture of Argentina was a strong point in this congress.

The final declaration of the congress revolved around strategic actions for initiating integrated cross-sectoral actions at global, regional, national and local scales on key issues including climate change, bio-energy, water, biodiversity, food security and poverty alleviation to reduce the ongoing adverse impacts of forests. The implementation of mechanisms for cross-sectoral monitoring and reporting to influence policies and actions related to forestry was pronounced. 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 recognised and realised till date, but these issues emerged in this congress. Economic mechanisms were proposed to take full account of these values thereby reducing deforestation and illegal and unsustainable activities. Given the unprecedented pressure on forests, this congress gave strict findings and strategic actions in its final stages to improve the vital balance between forests and development.

Argentina with its warm weather and welcoming nature made the congress even a bigger success. The beautiful city of Buenos Aires helped the students to go beyond the intensive working sessions of this congress and explore the fascinating culture and traditions of Latin America especially Argentina. Parts of the city and its happening nightlife and active young generation made it lucrative for the global students represented by IFSA.

The IFSA