



# Conference on Halting Deforestation and Increasing Forest Area

## 'FROM ASPIRATION TO ACTION'

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International Conference at the FAO headquarters, Rome





## IFSA Delegation Report

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## Summary

The International Conference on Deforestation sought to bring together a variety of stakeholders around the topic of halting deforestation and increasing forest area with a goal of sparking action towards the SDG 15.2 target of halting deforestation by 2020. The main focus was a shared understanding of the approach that is needed to achieve zero deforestation in the foreseeable future. Land conversion and forest degradation as a result of agricultural and urban development are considered the primary drivers. Through this, deforestation is linked to many social issues and demographics, which makes it a multifaceted challenge qualifying for creative and innovative, cross-sectoral solutions.

IFSA has an interest in the young and fruitful collaboration with the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) and a continued productive relationship with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) as a long term official partner. The interests of GLF and FAO on deforestation are closely aligned to the academic and professional interest of the IFSA members. At this conference, IFSA led a Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL) delegation and youth training in the spirit of the conference's main goal, by bringing together over 50 students and young professionals from various disciplines and different countries around the globe.

Relevant material available online:

[International FAO Conference link](#)

[Short IFSA report](#)

## Delegation Characteristics & Organisation

IFSA led the Youth in Landscapes (YIL) delegation during the conference. The YIL delegation consisted of 51 participants, of which 22 were IFSA members. Participants were selected for a balanced delegation based on experience, geography and gender. Members of the YIL delegation actively engaged in discussions, made meaningful interventions during plenary sessions, facilitated the organisation of the conference and strengthened their personal networks and that of the organisations they represented (e.g. YPARD<sup>1</sup>, indigenous groups, Forest and Farm facility, EAAE<sup>2</sup>, IAAS, ILA<sup>3</sup>, GLF Youth Ambassador 2017). Delegation members highlighted the importance of involving young people in decision making processes and capacity building for children and youth. Encompassing this message, the delegation's slogan was '[shake the coconut tree](#)', which received much attention and acclaim.

The YIL delegation included 51 participants representing a total of 35 countries on four continents, Europe, Africa, Asia, South America. It brought together members from IFSA,

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<sup>1</sup> YPARD: Young Professionals for Agricultural Development

<sup>2</sup> EAAE: European Association of Agricultural Economists

<sup>3</sup> ILA: International Law Association



Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), International Association of Agricultural Science Students, European Geography Association for students and young professionals (EGEA) and several independent students and young professionals. Some different disciplines represented were Forestry, Agronomy, Environmental Policy, Environmental Economics, Rural Sociology.

### **Leadership team**

A leadership team of IFSA members was established in order to coordinate, support and maintain the cohesion within the YIL delegation before, during and after the conference. The team developed and organised a **one-day training programme** for the YIL delegation, including expert speeches, presentations and workshops.

### **Core teams**

Members of the leadership team were each assigned a core team. The goal of the core teams was to establish ownership and accountability to its members, for the process of delivering a joint product within a very limited time frame. In this case, the product was a high-quality [\*\*online training course on halting deforestation\*\*](#).

### **Communication team**

Two IFSA members produced and oversaw communication with non-participants to the conference with the goal of circulating information for IFSA members, partners and other interested individuals and organisations. The communication strategy was actively focused on different platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

## Programme

The conference emphasised the importance of halting deforestation and increasing the global forest cover. Agriculture and urbanization were considered as primary drivers, stemming from social and demographic changes. These developments underline the needs of a cross-sectoral and transparent effort. A series of plenary and parallel sessions encouraged broad stakeholder participation (e.g. private sector, indigenous and policy actors) and interaction within and between sectors to promote an effective dialogue.

Plenary sessions included:

- Speeches from officials from GLF, FAO, other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and United Nations Environment (UNEP)
- Speeches from policy makers and experts representing countries, industry, science & civil society
- Closing remarks, summary and agenda setting

Parallel sessions included:

### **1. Landscape approach: in an integrated way under changing climate:**

- Including anthropocentric approaches for integrated landscape management
- Agroforestry and silvo-pastoral systems
- Landscape restoration
- Sustainable agricultural production

### **2. Sustainable Production**

- Corporate commitment and zero deforestation?
- Forest products and bio-economy
- Valuing forest ecosystem services
- Strengthening small-scale producers

### **3. Forest Smart policies and governance**

- Cross-sectoral policy coordination
- Improving land governance and roles of different stakeholders

### **4. How do we upscale solutions? Looking at financing, technologies and research**

- Public and private international finance
- Innovative technologies for land use monitoring
- Funding mobilisation
- Roles of science and research

## IFSA Participation & Involvement

The leadership team organized a **one-day training workshop** in collaboration with GLF, FAO and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) in order to enhance youth empowerment, increase capacity building activities, exchange information and strengthen the network between the delegates and experts.

The youth training session included:

- Experts - speeches by Kai Lintunen (FFA), Courtney Paisley (YPARD), Alexander Buck (IUFRO), Jeffrey Campbell (FAO), Cora Van Oosten (WUR), Salina Abraham (IFSA) Khalil Walji (IFSA)
- Think landscape, get restoration ready - workshop by Cora Van Oosten (WUR)
- Gender in forestry - workshop by Taylor Tondelli (FAO)
- SDG's and UNFF - presentation (Major Group Children & Youth session) - Steffen Dehn & Joost de Koning (IFSA), Salina Abraham (IFSA/GLF)
- Design Thinking - workshop by Steffen Dehn (IFSA)

The overall opinion of a young student after the one-day training program: '*I am glad I was part of this movement. I want to be part of many more to come and more than ever champion and contribute to projects on the ground*' (Youth delegate)

### Summary of the Design Thinking (DT) workshop

DT is used to understand and explore not only the problem but also the problems underlying the problem. 53% had never heard of DT before the workshop. The majority felt that using this method contributed to their personal background knowledge.

#### Workshop setup:

The participants were divided into teams to each tackle a specific question: 1) public interest in forests, 2) new tools for training youth and students, 3) how to enhance forest education methods, 4) elaborating youth ideas and contributions for the [UNFF Agenda 2030](#).

All teams went through different steps of the DT process, producing innovative ideas concerning the questions and how challenges related to halting deforestation and youth participation could be faced in the future.

#### Achievements:

- Ideas which could feed into the Major Group Children & Youth work plan and thus could help to achieve the [United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030](#) (UNSPF) (e.g. provide a platform where young people can share their projects and initiatives).
- Facilitated knowledge exchange and enhanced collaboration among participants.
- Established a basic understanding of international policy instruments (e.g. UNSPF, Global Forest Goals and Sustainable Development Goals).
- Further elaboration of international policy tools by the participants; collecting different ways in which young people could contribute to these global agendas.

## Delegate feedback

The **training session survey** has been completed by 31 out of 51 participants; because of the high response rate the results are considered representative.

Introductory questions showed that 59% of the delegates had done a youth training session before, for 41% it was the first time. The participants found the sessions useful. Below is a brief description of participants' impressions and feedbacks.

- Opening speeches - very motivational and informative, showed intergenerational support
- Think landscape, get restoration ready - dynamic presentation, explaining how to work collaboratively and how to approach professional careers
- Gender in forestry - reflection and clarification on the meaning and importance, practical examples were very useful, inspirational for new perspectives
- SDG's and UNFF presentation - good level of information, could use more structure and interaction and time to comprehend the topics
- Design Thinking - transition to the workshop was a bit messy, good workshop, it allowed participants to think and build an idea together, everyone thinks effectively and efficiently, many topics in a short time

### Overall Impression about the training day

The participants believed the speakers were well selected and open for further discussion. The training provide space for community building and creativity expression. Nevertheless, the organisation could run smoother, possibly due to lack of experience of the leaders, enough resources for support and the high number of people attending. The presence of several participants could also have slowed down the process development and the synchronization. It represents a really good way to better comprehend YIL, and a unique opportunity to build networks between young professionals, senior specialists and students. An additional training for entrepreneurship would be a plus.

### Youth motivational factors for attending the conference

Participants attended this conference

- to positively influence and guide their professional career
- they were passionate about youth engagement
- they felt the need to strengthen their network
- it seemed a good opportunity to build and reinforce the YIL and IFSA community
- there was an interest in SDG's and deforestation.

The conference met the expectations of more 80% of the respondents, the remnant 20% declared that the conference exceeded their expectations.

### **What was the success based on?**

*"I have been disappointed by different conferences but this one was the exception, we are making progress and enhancing youth empowerment" (participant opinion)*

The conference provided the opportunity to transform delegates' skills into actions and new learning outcomes. It enhanced their motivation and focus on climate change, halting deforestation and general stakeholder involvement; through knowledge improvement by a direct transfer between professionals and youth.

Additionally, youth coalition building and team-working spirit had a greater impact than imagined.

*"It was a really useful experience to structure our different ideas and produce a final and effective project" (Youth delegate message)*

### **What did Youth participants like about DT? (extracted from the DT survey)**

Delegates showed a high level of participation. Thinking out-of-the box principles "force you to look for new perspectives". It enhances ideas thinking on the spot (individually and together) and guidance to the selection to a final project. The ideation session showed creative delegates and created strong team spirit. The ability to elaborate a solution in a short time has been underlined and empowered.

*"It is necessary to underline the **many challenges surrounding youth participation**"*  
(personal impression from an IFSA leader delegate).

The workshop on Design Thinking ran by MGCY, gave the participants' the opportunity to contribute with their ideas and thoughts for the elaboration of the UNSPF.

A Youth delegate reported: *'I am very curious about the developments of the MGCY/UNSPF document, and I hope we as a group/IFSA will be engaged in the process! I hope we can bring people to take action'.*



## Outcomes & Follow-up

### Outcomes

The success of this conference came from the effective alignment of partner expectations and desires, IFSA's strategy for engagement, and the political momentum towards making new progress in achieving ambitious global goals. This was also IFSA's debut leading such a cross-sectoral and large delegation including many non-IFSA members. Responses from the delegates and partners were favourable on the short course, the one-day training session, the professional general event organisation. So successful was the message about the necessity of youth involvement and the campaign to 'shake the coconut tree', that the co-chair, Hiroto Mitsugi, included youth empowerment as one of the key messages in his summary of the conference (included in Annex 2). This summary went on to be presented at the 13th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forest in May 2018 where IFSA represented and launched the Major Group Children and Youth Work Plan and validated youth presence and contributions during the "Forests Day" at the High-Level Political Forum in July 2018.

Many valuable recommendations for future IFSA involvement in similar events were developed throughout this process. These are outlined in Appendix 1.

### From theory to action!

How Youth delegates are planning to halt deforestation and raising awareness?

- writing thesis based on topics learned from conference
- more consideration on carbon footprint
- enhance tree planting in local community
- sharing experiences and knowledge
- setting up agroforestry projects
- using the power of social media to share message

### Outreach & Communication

16,500 people unable to attend the conference were reached online using several platforms. The majority of interactions took place on Twitter and through retweets by major organisations (e.g. CGIAR Forest, CIAT, UN FAO investment, FAO Forestry, UN-REDD programme, World Agroforestry, IFAD and IUFRO). Instagram was effective for seeing 'behind the scenes' stories during the event. Facebook was used for connecting with alumni and other IFSA followers.

*The short course's outreach had reached 665 viewers in two months time.*



## Follow-up

- MCGY Work Plan for UNFF (May 2018)
- Continue conversation to GLF's Restoring Africa's Degraded Lands event with UNEP in Nairobi to be held August 29-30 2018
- Use this delegation report of an event well organised as a template for future events and as a motivation for improvement of the organisational power of IFSA.
- Discuss the future division of responsibilities at such events with the communication commission.
- Make sure to expressively thank the individuals and partners that were key to the success of the event.
- FAO Summary Report concerning Youth involvement, impacts and future actions for the co-chair Hiroto Mitsugi, including a future plan and funding proposal for a Youth delegation at COFO
- Report delivery to ITTO, Bernhard Worm and other partners (if necessary)



## Appendix 1. Recommendations

### - Participant selection (leadership & core team):

*Why:* Smooth process and confident leadership to the delegation

*What:* A delegation leadership based on IFSA's ambitions (skillful/experienced: IFSA knowhow, partner interest/knowledge, public speaking, networking skills, inspirational leadership/mentorship; gender balanced; geographically appropriate/balanced)

*Who:* Commission head/Liaison Officer/IFSA 7

*When:* 4 months in advance

### - Concept note:

*Why:* Identify key delegation message to facilitate strong collective statements during event  
Communication tool between partner(s) and co-organisers

Communication tool to leverage sponsorship

Identify key goals for IFSA (& delegation) and common goals with partners/allies, f.e.

- Plenary speech
- Plenary interventions
- Forge content alliances
- Build new partnership
- Strengthen relationships with partners/individuals
- etcetera

*What:* Describe activities & goals for the event

*Who:* Leadership

*When:* 3 months in advance

### - Participant selection ( Youth delegation):

*Why:* Continuous flow of skillful IFSA delegates

*What:* A balanced delegation based on IFSA's ambitions (new/experienced; gender balanced; geographically appropriate/balanced)

*Who:* Leadership (& Commission head/Liaison Officer)

*When:* 3 months in advance

### - IFSA delegation Plan

*Why:* identify goals, priorities and strategy for IFSA delegation

*What:* describe priorities, IFSA' s targets and goals to the leadership and core team

Develop a brief training (maybe with some key notes) for the other delegate (explain: behaviors/networking/interventions development/IFSA boundaries)

*Who:* Leadership/Liaison Officer

*When:* 4 months in advance

### - Activities, workshops, speakers:

*Why:* Speakers to connect delegates to the content and the network of the event

Activities and workshops are an effective way of collaborative content learning and capacity building for delegates

*What:* Identify, select and prepare relevant themes for activities and workshops



Invite speakers/facilitators (focus on those attending the event for maximum efficiency of time and resources)

*Who:* Leadership

*When:* 3 months in advance

- **Secretariat Location:**

*Why:* Collaboration and communication are key to success. To this end the delegation needs a space to meet and work

*What:* Facilitate presentation and meeting tools (beamer, internet, flip over, etc.)

Arrange a space to accommodate the leadership and preferably seats the whole delegation

*Who:* Commission head/Liaison Officer (& Leadership)

*When:* 2 months in advance

- **Communication team:**

*Why:* Create exposure for core messages of IFSA/delegation/partners

*What:* Messages on multiple platforms

*Who:* Social media team and IFSA communication commission

For an event this big, two people proved insufficient, suggestion could be one per platform

*When:* Social media work should begin a day before (allowing people to see IFSA is at an event and will be broadcasting the event as it happens)

- **IFSA business cards circulation**

*Why:* facilitate communication and interaction within the venue/partners/Youth organizations (provided to the leaders)

*What:* more efficient and effective networking

*Who:* Communication team/liaison officer

*When:* 2 month

- **Suggestions by Youth delegation** (*Data extracted from the Youth training and DT Surveys*)

*Why:* improve youth involvement

*What:*

- Upscale the training session.
- Increase the number of youth involved.
- Smaller working groups.
- Youth training session in two days or longer, need more time to produce ideas.
- Develop mentor program and improve the engagement process.
- Plan a long term strategy and team based project.
- Shift the Youth training day at the end of the conference.
- Improve the organization and structure of the Youth training (e.g. shifting activities)
- Organize it more frequently during Youth activities (e.g. IFSA meetings)

*Who:* Leadership/Liaison Officer/Communication team

*When:* depend on each case



International Forestry Students' Association

## Appendix 2. Co-Chairs Conference Summary