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This is the opinion of **Jan Heino, Assistant Director General of the Forestry Department at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations**, under the auspices of which the World Forestry Congress has been held every six years since 1926.



[\[watch the interview\]](#)

Rome, FAO headquarters – In the 21st century, we know that the future of our economy and food security is inextricably linked to one challenge: energy. Efforts to create jobs, achieve energy security and combat climate change demand integration among different agencies, cooperation among governments and partnerships with the private sector. Founding cooperation on responsibility is a priority, one which is shared by the team which will be assembled at the XIII World Forestry Congress. Listen to **Jan Heino, Assistant Director General of the Forestry Department at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations**.

Q. What distinguishes the World Forestry Congress from the growing number of international meetings on forests?

A. The World Forestry Congress focuses on the practical side of forestry concentrating on the real issues that affect the every day lives of those who depend on forest resources for their survival and livelihoods. The main purpose of the gathering is for experts to exchange information on the latest institutional developments, research findings and technological innovations.

Q. What are some of the key challenges facing the forest sector today?

A. The continuing loss of forests and forest degradation pose a critical challenge. Research has demonstrated repeatedly that damage to forest ecosystems is significant and is affecting everyone through climate change, increased water scarcity and loss of biological diversity. With world population on the rise and global warming a growing concern, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the goals we set for ourselves in terms of combating hunger and eliminating poverty. The situation will worsen unless leaders take bold action. Nothing else will suffice.

Q. And how is FAO assisting countries to address them?

A. FAO provides technical expertise to countries to help them manage forests sustainably for the range of benefits they provide – economic, environmental, social and cultural. People who depend on forest products and services for their basic needs and livelihoods understand their importance. As an authoritative global source of information on forests, **FAO shares knowledge and data through timely, effective use of the media in all its forms.** It does so with a view to supporting national forestry authorities in their efforts to influence decisions at the highest political level, especially those which are made outside the sector but have a profound impact on it.

Q. As Chair of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), tell our readers what makes this unique arrangement so effective?

A. The CPF consists of 14 international organizations and secretariats, each with a mandate to address forest issues. **One of the keys to its success is the fact that it is an informal and voluntary arrangement of executive heads who share common goals** and the desire to build on each other's strengths to help countries achieve sustainable forest management. **Another element which contributes to our effective collaboration is the principle that all members are equal partners around the table.**

*Jan Heino was appointed Assistant Director-General, Head of the Forestry Department of the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations** in June 2006. In 2000 he was appointed Director-General of Metsähallitus, the Finnish State Forest Enterprise. Previously to that date, he held the following positions in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland: Assistant Director-General, Special Adviser to the Minister, Director-General/Head of the Forestry Department. Before joining the public service, Jan worked within private and municipal forestry. **Jan Heino** holds a B.Sc. in Forestry and a M.Sc. in Forestry and Nature Conservation from the University of Helsinki, Finland. In June 2008, the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Helsinki conferred to **Jan Heino** a degree as Doctor Honoris causa.*