

United Nations Forum on Forests 12th Session

IFFA organized Side-Event

“Strengthen the link between sustainable management of forests and efforts to combat climate change”

Statement at Panel discussion

Delivered by the International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA), 3rd May 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

Representing forest owners, I would like to discuss the topic from Finland’s aspect. Forests cover 75 per cent of Finland so as you can imagine they are very important for us.

There are links between forests and climate change: deforestation and afforestation. Deforestation is not a problem in Finland and afforestation is done automatically after harvesting, thanks to our forest act.

There are definitely multiple benefits from sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management is very useful for several sectors. Ecological sustainability refers, of course, to nature and to biodiversity and its importance. Economical sustainability therefore is important for national economy.

Growth of forests and growing speed are important when it comes to carbon sequestration. Young forests, as they grow, absorb more carbon from the atmosphere than old ones. We often hear one to talk of forests as carbon stocks, but as I mentioned old forests do not absorb carbon as effectively as young forests. Instead, if forests are old, happens quite the opposite: forests become sources for carbon emissions.

When practicing sustainable forest management, forests absorb as much carbon as forests release naturally and after harvesting. However, most of the carbon which is released in harvesting, stays away from atmosphere since carbon is absorbed to wood products. For instance, in houses made of wood, in wooden furniture and in books carbon can be stored for decades, even for centuries.

Wood based energy, for example logging residues and side products from forest industry, can replace production of fossil energy: as we know fossil energy is a huge source for carbon emission and it must be replaced.

Ladies and gentlemen, the moderator of this side event asked for an example of sustainable forest management, increasing forest resources and linking these together in fighting against climate change. I can proudly give an example from Finland. Forests in Finland grow more than 100 million cubic meters annually. After the second world war the amount of Finnish forest resources has increased by 72 per cent and yet, at the same time, the removal of our forests has been 3,9 billion cubic meters due to harvesting and natural loss. Can we call this a miracle of growth? No, it is called sustainable forest management.