

## OPENING REMARKS

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Good morning, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Third International Workshop on Forest Conservation in Asia and the Pacific Region, hosted by the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, or "IGES" for short. This series of workshops started first at the IGES Center in Hayama in July 1998, followed by the second workshop, held in Singapore in November 1998.

Needless to say, human beings today face a host of environmental problems. Industrial pollution, loss of bio-diversity, and global warming are a few of the examples. The very survival of human beings depends on the sustainability of global ecosystems.

In the forestry sector, continuing depletion and degradation of forests are occurring in many parts of Asia and the Pacific region. Millions of hectares of forest have been swept by forest fires, excessive logging, land use change, mining and other human activities.

Who is responsible for forest loss and degradation? Governments, local communities or private sector such as commercial loggers and timber traders? What are the underlying causes? How can participatory forest management be achieved? What kind of legal and structural measures, as well as timber trade policy, should be taken in order to attain sustainable management of forests? These are some of the issues that we have to address in this workshop.

Now let me explain briefly about IGES Forest Conservation Project. This project is one of the six strategic projects that IGES is currently undertaking in order to develop innovative policy measures and strategies to address forest and forest-related issues. The main focus and efforts are directed to prepare a strategy for conservation and sustainable management of forest in Asia and the Pacific region. It also aims to propose legal and policy measures needed for conserving forests. In order to attain these purposes, IGES Forest Conservation Project is divided into four strategic sub-themes. These are Legal Analysis, Structural Analysis, Timber Trade, and Participatory Forest Management.

Analytical levels of these sub-themes vary from local and national, to international levels, and from tropical to temperate boreal forests. Thus, as you can tell, doing research in forest conservation is really an ambitious task. Besides, since the number of IGES staff is rather limited, the roles expected to be played by the collaborative researchers are very important. By working together, both IGES and collaborative researchers are expected to contribute to developing a strategy of forest conservation.

The outputs of this research project will be submitted to major international policy consultation fora such as ECO-ASIA (The Environmental Congress for Asia and the Pacific), IFF (Intergovernmental Forum on Forestry), and NGO meetings. This is in order to enable the results to be widely acknowledged and properly implemented.

This 3<sup>rd</sup> international workshop is going to discuss the results of the research produced by the four sub-themes during the first year. We hope all the participants are able to present and discuss your research findings, share ideas and perspectives, and propose a strategy to move a step forward in sustainable use and management of forests in Asia and the Pacific countries.

A lot of work is ahead of us in addressing the forestry issues in this workshop. But for the moment, I wish you every success in your discussion in the days ahead. I sincerely hope that everyone will find this workshop stimulating, enriching, and fruitful by the end of the final day.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, for those who have come a long way from home to attend this

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workshop, please do find some time to enjoy the sights and sounds of Tokyo and surrounding areas during your stay in Japan

Good luck and let us work together. Thank you.