

Roundtable 1 – Forests – our common good. Enhancing sustainable development in light of Paris Agreement

Dear Prof. Szyszko, [Minister of Environment of Poland,]

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me thank you, Mr. Minister, for having organized the High Level Meeting on the occasion of the Las2017 session and European Forest Week. Let me apologize Minister of Agriculture of the Czech Republic, Mr. Marian Jurečka, for not being able to take part in the meeting personally because of his other duties. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak on both themes of the roundtables and exchange views with representatives of other countries and intergovernmental organizations.

Turning to the theme of the first roundtable, it is clear that Paris Agreement brought a lot of attention to forests and forest sector and has been a new impulse for promoting sustainable forest management all over the world.

Climate change, which manifests itself in growing temperatures, increasing drought and more frequent extreme weather events, is undoubtedly one of the most serious challenges that Czech foresters face today. All those factors have recently resulted in an unprecedented bark beetle outbreak and the dieback of Norway spruce stands in Northern Moravia. They cause difficulties not only from the point of view of forest health and vitality, but have negative impact on the timber market as well. The phenomenon has already exceeded the field of forestry, is closely observed by general public and might have implications for other sectors, like water management, rural development, transportation, nature protection and others.

What comes to my mind, when I am looking at the Paris Agreement, especially at its Article 5, which refers to sustainable forest management, is that we need balanced approach to mitigation and adaptation measures. It is not wise to simply strive for maximizing carbon sinks in forest stands. High carbon stocks may also mean a high risk of disturbances and their consequences in lowered provision of forest goods and services.

The Czech forestry has a specific starting point: high growing stock volumes and correspondingly high sinks in above-ground forest biomass. On the other hand, the stocks have often accumulated in unstable coniferous forests stand, susceptible to be damaged by drought. I am convinced that, first of all, we need to adapt our forests to climate change, to increase their resilience, even that it might mean temporary decrease of carbon sinks in

forests. Only well-adapted forests can provide their multiple benefits to the society, including the mitigation of climate change.

Our other priority is to promote use of wood as renewable material in the Czech society. It is one of the goals of the Strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture for the period until 2030. We would like to increase wood consumption especially in the construction sector, where we see the highest potential for the climate change mitigation effect by substituting other materials.

Dear Mr. Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your attention!