

Speech by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Norway at
the opening of the FOREST EUROPE MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE OSLO 14-16 JUNE 2011

Ministers, Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning - and welcome to Norway!

Through holding the chairmanship of FOREST EUROPE during the last four years Norway has wished to contribute to secure multiple social, economic and environmental benefits from forests to society.

This conference is a result of years' efforts of many of you. I congratulate you with your achievements, Ladies and Gentlemen - and hope you will experience these coming days to be rewarding.

Since 2004, I have been working with the United Nations Development Programme to promote the Millenium Development Goals. My main motivation in this engagement is a strong belief that all people should have equal rights to realise their potential as human beings.

During these years I have had the chance to visit communities in Botswana, Burundi, Cambodia, Guatemala - and other developing countries around the world.

I have met with people in their villages who showed me how they use forests, trees and wood for their everyday existence. I have learned how forests provide food, fuel for cooking and heating, medicine, shelter and clothing. But also how they

function as safety nets in crises or emergencies – preventing landslides and limiting droughts.

These human encounters and personal stories have helped me to understand key roles that forests play for human well-being. Capacity building, good governance and increased international cooperation are necessary to secure sustainable forest management for human development.

There are telling figures that illustrate the importance of forests: The World Bank indicates that some 1.6 billion of the world's poorest people live in and from forests. About 1.2 billion people rely on agro-forestry farming that helps to sustain agriculture productivity and generate income.

Forests provide significant social, environmental and economic benefits.

They are important for biodiversity, water balance, carbon cycle and as carbon sinks.

Forests, sustainably managed, are becoming an important part of the solution for global challenges. Growing forests sequester carbon, wood products store carbon through their life time, and renewable energy is being supplied by wooden biomass.

Only during the last 5 years, about 870 million tonnes of CO₂ have been removed annually from the atmosphere by photosynthesis and tree biomass growth in Europe. This corresponds to about 10 percent of the green-house gas emissions of Europe in 2008.

It is essential to integrate forests as a significant component of future actions and mechanisms for combating climate change and into future strategies towards a low carbon economy.

How will a future sustainable, low carbon economy look like? It will be based on innovations, with new employment opportunities, with a higher share of renewable energy, cleaner products that would not contribute to harming our environment, and lush, healthy trees and forests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

FOREST EUROPE is an important initiative. It shows an example on how collaborative efforts of many countries have materialised improvement of forests and their sustainable management on the ground, while also contributing to the internationally agreed development goals.

Today, you who are present here today are setting a scene for even better and improved partnership for forests in Europe.

This meeting will put European cooperation into a new track and I wish you success in achieving new ambitious goals.

This morning, I planted a tree in the gardens of the Norwegian Forestry Society here in Oslo. This symbolic gesture is my tribute to forests and the celebration of the International Year of Forests 2011.

I'm pleased to declare the FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference open.

I wish you fruitful discussions and a rewarding meeting.

Thank you.