



**WORLD SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT**
BEYOND 2015: PEOPLE, PLANET & PROGRESS

Role of Forests in Achieving India's INDC

October 7th, 2016 | 1630 to 1830 hours

Venue: Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Forest and trees cover 79.42 million hectares, constituting 24.16% of the geographical area of the country (FSI, 2015¹). Forests are home to 80% of country's terrestrial biodiversity; provides 40% of energy needs, and 30% of fodder supply along with other produce. It has been estimated that more than 300 million people depend on forests for their livelihoods (MoEFCC undated²). Hence, forests are critical for ecological balance and form an integral part of the social, cultural, and economic life of millions of people in the country.

Human and cattle population with over dependence on forests has led to unsustainable exploitation of this resource. It has been estimated that 850 million tonnes (MT), 100 MT, and 15 MT of fodder, fuel wood, and timber are harvested from forests annually beyond the sustainable limits, respectively, resulting in their wide spread degradation (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2009³). More than 40% of the forests of the country are in open category, much of which are degraded (FSI, 2015). Though India has marginally increased its forest and tree cover over the last two decades, forest degradation remains the major concern.

It also provides an opportunity to increase the growing stock of the forests and contribute to climate mitigation efforts of the country. As reported in biennial update report of 2015, the net emissions of the country in 2010 were 1884.30 MT of CO₂e (MoEFCC, 2015). The land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector was reported to be a net sink which offset 252 MT of CO₂e or 12% of the total GHG emissions (*ibid*). India has increased its forest carbon stock by about 5%, from 6621.5 MT in 2005 to 6941 MT in 2013 (GoI, 2015⁴). Hence, forestry sector is

¹ State of Forest Report 2015, Forest Survey of India

² Asia Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study-II, Country Report, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India

³ Forest Resources Degradation, Livelihoods and Climate Change in Green India: Looking Back to Change Track, The energy and Resources Institute, Delhi

⁴ India First Biennial Update Report to UNFCCC, 2015, MoEFCC

already contributing to climate mitigation, but there is still huge potential to increase carbon sink with additional efforts.

Government of India has submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat in October 2015. It has pledged to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP by 33%–35% by 2030 from 2005 level through mitigation efforts across various sectors (GoI, 2015). Forestry sector constitutes an important part of INDC . It has been envisaged to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂e through additional forest and tree cover by 2030 (ibid). Government of India wants to achieve this target through National Mission on Green India, National Afforestation Programme, and programmes such as compensatory afforestation and plantations under national agroforestry policy and special plantation drives across states.

However, the target of forestry sector is highly ambitious with complex implementation challenges. There are various issues that need to be discussed before designing a roadmap for the forestry sector. The thematic event on forests aims to discuss some of the important issues with key stakeholder such as representatives from Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change; research organizations; NGOs; and state forest departments.

Some of the important issues that will be discussed are as follows.

- What are the plans/schemes/programmes to achieve the forestry target?
- How much additional resources are needed and whether these will be available?
- What will be the monitoring and reporting framework?
- What are the research gaps and how these will be covered?