

IUFRO



SPOTLIGHT

International Union of Forest Research Organizations

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*IUFRO Spotlight* is an initiative of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations. Its aim is to introduce, in a timely fashion, significant findings in forest research from IUFRO officeholders and member organizations to a worldwide network of decision makers, policy makers and researchers. IUFRO will encapsulate, and distribute in plain language, brief, topical and policy-relevant highlights of those findings, along with information on where/how to access the full documents.

Occasionally, *IUFRO Spotlight* also presents special activities such as sessions at major IUFRO congresses or the work of the IUFRO Task Forces. These focus on emerging key issues that contribute to international processes and activities and are of great interest to policy makers and to groups inside and outside the forest sector. With those criteria in mind, **the Spotlights for the next several months will highlight the undertakings and goals of the IUFRO Task Forces.** The *IUFRO Spotlights* will be distributed in a periodic series of emails as well as blog postings.

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## IUFRO Task Forces: A multi-disciplinary approach to addressing forest challenges around the globe

Current forest-related challenges are best addressed from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

Integrating knowledge from biophysical and socioeconomic sciences can provide more complete analyses of forest issues. These, in turn, are of more direct value to forest decision makers and practitioners.

That's one of the primary reasons underlying the IUFRO Task Forces (TFs).

"The TFs serve as the platforms for scientists from different disciplines to work together and contribute their wisdom to the most pressing forest issues and international challenges," said Dr. Shirong Liu, IUFRO Vice-President for Task Forces.



*IUFRO Vice-President Shirong Liu at 2019 IUFRO World Congress in Curitiba, Brazil. Photo courtesy of Congress Organizing Committee.*

Professor Liu, Chief Research Scientist in Forest Ecology and Hydrology at the Chinese Academy of Forestry, where he also serves as President of the Academy, noted that the TFs – there are currently nine – have been established to run during the present five-year period (2019-2024), and focus on new or emerging topics that are centered on priority areas of IUFRO Strategy.

"This encourages activities across the full spectrum of IUFRO's disciplinary expertise and enables IUFRO to establish new TFs periodically as new challenges or opportunities arise," he said.

The nine Task Forces he will oversee are:

- [Forest Education](#)
- [Monitoring Global Tree Mortality Patterns and Trends](#)
- [Fire\\$: Economic Drivers of Global Wildland Fire Activity](#)
- [Forests and Water Interactions in a Changing Environment](#)
- [Gender Equality in Forestry](#)
- [Resilient Planted Forests Serving Society & Bioeconomy](#)

- [Strengthening Mediterranean Nursery Systems for Forest Reproductive Material Procurement to Adapt to the Effects of Climate Change](#)
- [Unlocking the Bioeconomy and Non-Timber Forest Products](#)
- [Transforming Forest Landscapes for Futures Climates and Human Well-Being](#)

Each TF links back to, and will address challenges relating to, IUFRO's overarching themes of Forests for People; Forests and Climate Change; Forests and Forest-based Products for a Greener Future; Forest, Soil and Water Interactions; and Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services and Biological Invasions.

The TFs are led by a Coordinator and usually involve a small group (up to four) of Deputy Coordinators. That group works with a much larger network of individuals from within and outside of IUFRO who are engaged to varying extents in particular sub-projects, involved in workshops and other meetings organized by the TF, and contribute to the publications and other major products of the TF.

IUFRO President John Parrotta said: "What all recent TFs have had in common is a very high level of activity and productivity, thanks to the excellent leadership of their coordinators (or coordination teams) and the sustained energy that these often very large multi-disciplinary groups seem to generate."

Dr. Parrotta, National Research Program Leader for International Science Issues with the U.S. Forest Service, is also a former IUFRO Vice-President in charge of TFs.

Dr. Liu has high expectations for the TFs. "I expect every TF can accomplish their objectives and goals, as set," he said. "And their outcomes and achievements can improve our knowledge, produce solutions, and assist in better informed decision making and science based policy and governance in forest management.

"Secondly, I hope the inter-divisional and cross-disciplinary cooperative and synergistic actions derived from the TFs can contribute to IUFRO's strategic goals through both their work outcomes and their experience in mobilizing cooperation.

"And finally, because the TFs involve various stakeholders from different circles, both inside and outside IUFRO, I hope they will deepen understanding about the expectations of different stakeholders toward IUFRO and better serve the science-policy interface," Dr. Liu said.

Not all forests are alike. Nor are cultures and perspectives. So Dr. Liu is enthusiastic about the diversity in the makeup of the TFs.

Of the eight TFs that have complete membership, there are 282 members from more than 52 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania and North America representing universities, research institutes, international organizations, government departments, intergovernmental organizations, foundations, charities, forest societies and enterprises.

From a gender perspective, for the nine TFs there are six women among the 19 deputy coordinators. And the joint IUFRO-IFSA Task Force on Forest Education is co-coordinated by a woman and a man.

Dr. Parrotta noted that during his 2014-2019 term as Vice-President in charge of TFs "we saw a much higher and consistent level of activity among our TFs.

"I think this is due to two factors. First, TFs are initiated by officeholders from within Divisions who are highly incentivized to expand the work of their units (Research Groups or Working Parties) to include a broader range of disciplinary expertise on their selected TF topics. We also instituted a more thorough and demanding process for TF proposals that involved two rounds of review by Board members; this ensured compliance with a number of criteria related to broad inclusion (in TF teams), clarity and feasibility of workplans, and availability of resources for accomplishment of TF objectives.



*IUFRO President John Parrotta.  
Photo by Michael Kleine, IUFRO.*

“Most of the Task Forces established during the 2014-2019 term greatly exceeded expectations in terms of their productivity, impact, contributions to major international scientific meetings, and establishment of durable working relations with new partners within and outside of the scientific community,” Dr. Parrotta said.

Dr. Liu complimented Dr. Parrotta for laying “a solid evolving basis for managing the task forces” and said in his own TF overseer role he will “try my best to make full use of the valuable assets accomplished by my predecessors to motivate, coordinate and encourage the alignment of work from all IUFRO Task Forces.”

*IUFRO Task Forces advance inter-disciplinary cooperation in forest research fields. Their focus is on emerging key issues that are of great interest to policy makers and groups inside and outside the forest sector, and contribute to international processes and activities: <https://www.iufro.org/science/task-forces/>*

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*The findings reported in IUFRO Spotlight are submitted by IUFRO officeholders and member organizations. IUFRO is pleased to highlight and circulate these findings to a broad audience but, in doing so, acts only as a conduit. The quality and accuracy of the reports are the responsibility of the member organization and the authors.*

*Suggestions for reports and findings that could be promoted through IUFRO Spotlight are encouraged. To be considered, reports should be fresh, have policy implications and be applicable to more than one country. If you would like to have a publication highlighted by Spotlight, contact: Gerda Wolfrum, IUFRO Communications Coordinator, wolfrum(at)iufro.org*

*The International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) is the only worldwide organization devoted to forest research and related sciences. Its members are research institutions, universities, and individual scientists as well as decision-making authorities and other stakeholders with a focus on forests and trees. Visit: <http://www.iufro.org/>*

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