

**Opening address of the Rector of the University of West Hungary,
Prof. Dr. Sándor Faragó**

Esteemed representatives of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, respected delegates of participating countries!

Let me warmly welcome you in Sopron, in this historic town which is the centre for the West Hungarian University. This institution is one of the major regional universities of this country, currently with ten faculties spread out in five cities of the region. We are proud to be the heirs of the oldest higher educational institution in technology not only in Hungary, but in whole continental Europe, founded in 1735.

You might ask why has FAO organised this workshop on Climate Change Impacts on Forest Management in Eastern Europe and Central Asia at this University, here in Sopron? Sopron is one of the cradles of higher education in European forestry. The Forestry Faculty celebrated its 200th anniversary last year. Sustained forest management and protection of the natural heritage has been a leading principle throughout these two centuries.

You should be also aware, that due to its ecogeographic position, Hungary experiences climatic and ecological conditions very similar to those in East and Southeast Europe. The problems and challenges we face here regarding the future of forests and forestry are therefore comparable to those in your native countries.

But there is also another reason: at this Faculty, a Regional Focus Centre for Non-boreal Eastern Europe, a member of the North Eurasian Earth Science Partnership Initiative network, has been recently launched with the support of NASA and other agencies, by Professor Csaba Mátyás, who is your local host. He is active member in a number of international projects and initiatives dealing with the possibilities of adaptation to expected climatic changes in forestry, and coordinating a joint national-EU project (TAMOP 4.2.2) which is also supporting this workshop.

I am very pleased that this meeting will deal with these extremely important and actual issues here in Sopron, because I strongly believe we have a significant body of common interest and we can certainly learn from your experiences and expertise.

I am looking forward for a successful meeting and sincerely hope that during these days you will have an opportunity to have a glance also on the rich historic and cultural heritage of this city and this University.

Good luck!