

Connecting knowledge to action

5 November 2018

To the Members and member organisations of EFI

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Dear Colleagues,

A Chinese proverb says “When the winds of change blow, some people build walls, others build windmills”, and now it is time to build windmills.

With these words I started my speech last month in Beijing, China where I was invited to speak at the 60th Anniversary of the Chinese Academy of Forestry.

Let me share with all of you some of the ideas I highlighted in my intervention.

After two hundred years of relying on a fossil-based economy, we have arrived at a tipping point. We are crossing our planetary boundaries due to climate change, biodiversity loss and the degradation of our natural resources. Such an unprecedented situation requires a new economic paradigm where prosperity takes place within the renewable boundaries of our planet. A paradigm where renewable energy but also renewable materials, become the basis for a new circular bioeconomy to ensure sustainable development.

In realising this transformational change, China has a great responsibility and faces many new business opportunities. Why? Because China is the largest producer of the main existing non-renewable materials. China produces 50% globally of textile fibres, steel and cement. In addition, it produces more than one-third of all plastics. In this context, China can play a key role in moving towards a circular bioeconomy, where non-renewable and fossil-based materials are replaced by bio-based renewable and sustainable solutions.

Forests, being the main source of non-food, non-feed renewable biological resources, are called to play a key role in such shift. In this respect, Europe has great experience in sustainable forest management and has developed some of the most advanced technologies within the emerging bioeconomy, including new renewable solutions like wood construction engineering products, wood-based textiles, bioplastics, etc. In view of meeting the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, the world will greatly benefit from a close partnership between China and Europe to move towards a circular bioeconomy.

In this context, during my visit to China, I signed a MoU with the Chinese Academy of Forestry (available [here](#)) to develop joint scientific work to better understand the challenges and potentials of the forest bioeconomy, including governance and policy aspects. In addition, this year we will also

launch a survey for our member organizations to map their existing collaboration with China. Based on that, EFI can better facilitate in the future a more structured and strategic collaboration between Europe and China regarding forest research.

Wishing you a reflective autumn,
Marc Palahí
Director

