



Every year an area of rainforest the size of New Jersey is cut down and destroyed, causing severe damage to the environment. On the *20th December 2006* The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness of sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. Now, the International Year of Forests is in full swing and the celebrations and events planned offer us an opportunity to reflect on, and appreciate, all the benefits we derive from the world's forests, as well as giving us a chance to mobilize for better protection of this precious resource.

The theme of the Forests 2011 celebration is "Forests for People," highlighting the value of forests and their economic and social relationship with humankind. Achieving a sustainable future requires the effort of everyday people. These people are Forest Heroes and to honour them, the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFFS) has launched the Forest Heroes Programme and Awards, which will recognize the efforts of people who work tirelessly to sustain, protect, and manage our forests. The programme will culminate in an awards ceremony as part of the Forests 2011 closing ceremony. UNFFS has also worked in collaboration with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival to organise the International Forest Film Festival (IFFF). The IFFF winning films were presented to delegates at the launch of the International Year of Forests 2011 at UN Headquarters, New York in February, 2011.

But the International Year of Forests is not only taking place in New York. All over the world events observing the International Year of Forests are taking place or are being planned. 'The

'Tree of Life Exhibition' in Helsingborg, Sweden, an *exhibition by Christel Kvant* about the significance of the tree for life on earth, has just closed its doors to the public. In the UK, the Forestry Commission England is holding a 'Forest Discovery Day' on September 11th

. All over the country, the Forest Discovery day aims to raise awareness of local forests by giving people the opportunity to meet rangers and talk about forests and multi-purpose forestry. At 2pm there will be a mass tree hug across the country.

On the political level, there are many conferences planned to discuss possible ways of preserving forests and their ecological values across the globe. The European Parliament will hold a celebration of the International Year of Forests on 6-7 September 2011. This high level event will focus on the challenges of sustainable management, conservation and development of forests in Europe and worldwide against climate change. In Indonesia, the conference 'Forests Indonesia' held in Jakarta 27 September 2011 will discuss alternative futures to meet demands for food, fibre, fuel and REDD+

. Later in the year, delegations from all corners of the world will meet in the South Korean city of Changwon for the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP 10 on October 10-21.

To find out more about the International Year of Forests and the events around the world connected to it, please visit: <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/index.shtml>

Sources:

United Nations Environmental Programme- About forests, link: <http://www.unep.org/forests/>

UN International Year of Forests 2011, Link: <http://www.un.org/en/events/iyof2011/index.shtml>

Forestry Commission Great Britain, link: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8BZHSM>