
OPENING ADDRESS

by

Professor Dr. HRH Princess Chulabhorn

The Privy Councilors, Minister of Agriculture and
Co-operatives, Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen :

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to deliver an address at this opening ceremony of the FORTROP'96 International Conference on Tropical Forestry in the 21st Century. As a former student of the university I am particularly pleased that this important conference is being hosted by Kasetsart University. To the many participants from overseas who are taking part in the Conference may I extend to you all a most cordial welcome to the Kingdom of Thailand.

The subject of your deliberations is one of the most important and urgent environmental issues of the present time and has vitally important consequences for the future of our planet.

Tropical forests form the most diverse and complex ecosystem. With a mere 7 % of the earth's land surface, they contain as much as 40 % of all living species. Tropical forests provide us with food, medicines, germplasm stocks to replenish our crops, and energy sources. Plants alone offer an abundant source of analgesias, antibiotics, heart drugs, enzymes, hormones, laxatives and other medicines. These ethnobotanical resources have been screened and developed in medical research laboratories all over the world, particularly in Europe and North America.

Thailand possesses over 10,000 species of vascular plants of 1,763 genera and 245 families, many of which have been found to be potentially effective in the treatment of malaria, cancer and other diseases. However, the Thais have for a long time made use of herbs to treat ailments with very limited knowledge of medical compositions and functions of the medicinal plants they use. In our research at the Chulabhorn Research Institute we are devoting our full efforts to rectify this situation. We are cooperating with national and international institutions and organisations in the exchange of knowledge and experience in this area with an ultimate goal to develop the

best use of ethnobotanical resources for the benefit of mankind as well as for the sustainable management of biodiversity.

We must make the 21st century a pivotal occasion for global natural resource management and environmental protection and restoration. The extent to which the potential of this century is realized will depend on the ability of the world's nations to effectively promote and manage sound and appropriate programs for both the sustainable development of natural resources and the conservation and restoration of the environment.

This conference provides an important opportunity to discuss and to set directions for the achievement of these programs and goals.

I wish you success in your deliberations commensurate with the importance of this undertaking.

I now declare open the FORTROP'96 International Conference on Tropical Forestry in the 21st Century.

