

TACCDA Workshop opening address

By **Pauli Mustonen**, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department of International Development Cooperation

Distinguished TACCDA workshop participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland I have the honour to wish you all welcome to the workshop “Trees, Agroforestry and Climate Change in Dryland Africa”, now to be held in Hyytiälä, Finland.

The Ministry considers the themes of this event being in line with important global events and processes and with the Finnish development cooperation policy in particular. The Johannesburg world summit on sustainable development, held in August-September 2002, offered an opportunity to review the progress achieved during ten years of implementation of the results of the Rio 1992 UNCED meeting. At Johannesburg, a consensus was also reached on the most urgent global problems that now need our foremost attention. They include, above all, elimination of extreme poverty, but also equally-discussed issues such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, deforestation, and availability of water for the Earth’s growing population.

Participants of this workshop are all well aware of the facts that trees and forests are a critical asset in dryland environments and therefore deserve our attention. Recent studies on the process of climate change also indicate that drylands and agroforestry systems in Africa can and must also be studied in relation to their role in global carbon cycles. It is therefore most appropriate that this workshop discusses the climate change and other global issues in addition to national and regional problems related to the sustainable use of natural resources.

Poverty reduction is now a central aim of development aid when discussed here in Finland or elsewhere in the industrialized countries. Trees and forests have an important role in poverty reduction, as already clearly demonstrated by the Centre for International Forest Research (CIFOR). Agroforestry is a traditional practice of land-use where trees contribute to the sustainability of the production system and therefore also to poverty reduction. Experiences from old and new types of agroforestry practices will be discussed during this workshop, and it will be extremely valuable for decision makers in Finland and other countries to share the conclusions and recommendations of your workshop.

No matter how good the technology is, we need an enabling environment for innovation and technology transfer. At our ministry we appreciate the fact that this workshop will also address this problem and aim at clear policy recommendations on urgent issues.

The present workshop is one in a long line of events in which Finland, and also VITRI at the University of Helsinki, have been involved. In 1995, here in Hyytiälä, the University of Helsinki helped in organizing a workshop on tropical dryland research. I guess some of the participants here today already attended that 1995 event. In 2000, with

international support, VITRI and its partners in Sudan arranged another well-attended workshop in Khartoum on farmland rehabilitation; it resulted in concrete policy recommendations for managers, administrators and researchers alike on critical dryland issues. A year ago in 2002, there was a smaller event, which concentrated particularly on the results of the Sudan-Finland cooperation, here in Hyytiälä. Prior to today's workshop there has been a well-attended e-mail conference on the issues on the present agenda. You will therefore be able to base your coming discussions on a long line of intensive preparatory work. I am convinced that this will make your work demanding but also very rewarding.

Ladies and gentlemen. It is now my pleasure to declare the workshop "Trees, Agroforestry and Climate Change in Dryland Africa" officially opened. – Thank you very much for your attention.