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Forests for fashion – Fashion for Forests, on 21 March, was an event held to celebrate and advocate the linkages between sustainable fashion and sustainable forest management, and was organized by UNECE/FAO on the occasion of the International Day of Forests.

Forests and fashion are related in many different ways. Many cellulose fibers produced from wood pulp, such as lyocel and tencel, are already used in the fashion industry because of their properties. They can be an excellent alternative to synthetic textiles, cotton or wool, as their manufacturing process is often more environmentally friendly. At the same time, fashion also can drive the unsustainable use of natural resources, but the "level of risk depends on how it is managed," said Mr. John Scanlon, Secretary General of CITES. He also pointed out that given the world population (7 billion people) and the massive volume of international trade connected to fashion, mismanagement could be potentially devastating and "wipe out a species in very little time".

According to Mr. Paolo Naldini, Managing Director, Citta dell'Arte - Fondazione Pistoletto, we are currently witnessing a paradigm shift in the management of forests and environmental resources "from their exploitation to their sustainable utilization". "We see already a market shift to making more use of biotic raw material," said Mr. Rob Busink, Chair of the European Forestry Commission. He then added that without sustainable forest management there is no sustainable fashion because "sustainable forest management is needed both to secure supply of raw material and to demonstrate that ecological, social and economic aspects have been taken into account during the production".

This paradigm shift is synthesized by the Maestro Michelangelo Pistoletto, one of the leading figures of the Italian Arte Povera movement, in the symbol of the Forests for fashion – Fashion for Forests conference, the "Third Paradise Tree". This design metaphorically describes the area where the sphere of nature and that of the artificial come together, defining a new world where nature thrives and humankind lives sustainably.

Forests for fashion – Fashion for Forests was structured around a series of initiatives including, an art performance; a conference with high level speakers drawn from the public and the private sector; the opening of a fashion exhibit created with clothes made of forest fibers and wood accessories designed by 15 emerging young designers; and a dance performance by choreographer Marthe Krummenacher.

Among the high-level keynote speakers for the event there were Maestro Michelangelo Pistoletto and Mario Boselli, President of the Italian National Chamber of Fashion.

For more information please visit: http://www.unece.org/forests/forestsforfashion and the photo gallery at: www.flickr.com/photos/98046700@N04/