

## Welcome Address

**Masaki Katsuta**  
**Director General**  
**Forestry and Forest Products**  
**Research Institute**

Distinguished Guests and Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute, I wish to extend a cordial welcome to all the participants and researchers, in particular to the delegates from abroad who are attending this international symposium on "Rehabilitation of Degraded Forest Lands in the Tropics" sponsored by the Tropical Agriculture Research Center.

Presently, problems relating to tropical forests are of major importance worldwide and many symposia or conferences have been held from the viewpoints of both the conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests. However, it is well known that large areas of forest lands in the tropics have been rapidly degraded. As indicated in the title of the present symposium, the rehabilitation of such degraded forest lands is the most urgent problem we have to focus on and solve.

For more than eighty years, our research institute has covered a wide range of research fields in relation to forest, forestry and forest products as the only national organization in Japan. Since we moved to Tsukuba from Tokyo in 1978, tropical forestry research has become one of the most important mandates in our institute, mainly because Japan is a country that is deeply concerned with tropical forests and forestry.

About 70% of the Japanese land is covered by forests, more than 40% of which being man-made forests consisting mostly of coniferous tree species such as cedar, cypress, larch and pine. Forest structure in Japan is therefore, totally different from that in the tropics. Therefore, we often come across unpredictable phenomena or facts and new findings in the tropics which encourage us to carry out further studies. On the other hand, we notice that there are many common scientific aspects between the temperate and the tropical forests.

As generally, forestry research in the tropics is comparatively new, we have to accumulate more data, exchange information and cooperate with each other for the promotion of research in this field.

I am convinced that the symposium will contribute to strengthen our friendship and cooperation, and I do hope you that all of you will enjoy this symposium.

Thank you.