

## **Welcome speech transcription from Scott Francisco at the 3ème édition de la conférence sur la préservation des forêts**

Hello ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to be here representing Cities4Forests and the thousands of friends and collaborators in our global network which includes over 100 cities. I am trained as an architect, but for the past 15 years I have dedicated my career to understanding forests and cities by working alongside these people and organizations, some of whom are in this room today. Thank you.

Forests and cities have always had a deep and dramatic relationship - in some ways opposite and in many ways similar, orbiting each other through history with equal gravitas. Connections and contradictions between these landscapes of discovery and imagination abound in the myths and fairy tales that have shaped our cultures over millennia. Today these connections have a new meaning and new urgency, as we understand our planet with radically new degrees of interconnectedness. Together on “spaceship earth” we are confronted with the roles we play as human and non-human actors shaping, using, and re-imagining our shared planet - our only home.

Cities today are home to the most people and represent an even *greater* majority of resource consumption and climate emissions. Meanwhile, forests still are the places on Earth that hold the most atmospheric carbon and biodiversity, let alone our shared imagination. Without healthy forests we would all perish. It may seem the opposite to city dwellers, but at no time in history have the interest of cities and the future of forests been more closely linked.

This gathering today in the City of Paris, City of Light, City of ideas, is a recognition of these developments and an *illumination* that we must move faster together.

Today we will discuss how cities can reach out beyond their boundaries to welcome forests into the conversation and culture of cities so that the energy and creativity of cities is directed at the long term health and wellbeing of forests. And we will practice listening to the custodians of the forests, to local and indigenous people who live there, and to governments and institutions who are closest to the great forests.

These are changes that have not yet happened, and the reason we are gathered here today.

### **3ème édition de la conférence sur la préservation des forêts**

Our goal is to discuss, listen, coalesce and apply these ideas through our systems of *regulation*, of *markets*, of technology, and most importantly of *culture* -- our shared values, vocabularies, aesthetics and habits.

The French tradition is full of examples where these systems have been engaged in creative ways to produce unexpected outcomes that have been shared with the whole world to change it for the better; in the arts, in food, in science, from pointillism to pain perdu, parachutes to Pasteurization. But the best may be the distinctly French word “entrepreneur” taking risks for future reward.

As entrepreneurs today we can find ways to connect rural and urban areas in enthusiastic dance. A balance of energy and calm, deep history and new ideas. This will involve people and places learning from each other and committing to each other's outcome. It will involve equal reward and respect for the work of the hand, the body and the mind. This may feel shocking to our “information age” but like everything worth doing, sacrifices are inevitable. Neither cities or forests will be the same; both may give something up to gain much more. For example, some trees will be cut to protect the whole forest. Maintenance of the city may require more participation and effort as our bridges and buildings are made of carbon-storing wood, rather than concrete. Food and coffee may become more expensive if these are now tools for conservation of forests. We will learn to be less wasteful and like generations before us, use our resources more carefully and with greater appreciation of their origin.

Our cultures throughout history have been forged by these limitations, and they have produced beauty and complexity and developed ways of working together to solve immense challenges. Today we have technologies that our ancestors barely dreamed of. These tools will undoubtedly extend our reach, but should never become the object of an end in itself.

*Now* is the time to grasp the full potential of systemic *collaboration*, human teamwork bound by a shared goal to work across all boundaries, to exceed past accomplishments to correct and transcend mistakes, and to co-create a future for all.