

Opening speech – exhibition “*Forest in the Forester`s Eye*” , February 06 2020

Dear guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome you here, in the Europe Building, in the occasion of the opening ceremony of the exhibition “*Forest in the Forester`s Eye*”.

Forests are indispensable: they are our lungs and life-support system, they give us the air we breathe, water we drink.

According to the Croatian constitution, forests and forest lands are of general interest and because of the fact, they enjoy particular protection of the state.

Croatia is known for its forests: 47% of total area is covered with forests, and these forests are known for their biodiversity: Croatia's flora captures 4,500 species, and 50% of them are in forest habitats (ecosystems). The most represented species is beech, the most valuable one is the pedunculate, „Slavonian“ oak.

I would say that this is a result of good forest management - Croatian foresters are known for long tradition of sustainable forest management. There are records for over 250 years of organized forest management: three forest management units were established in 1765, and one of them is still working at the same place. Forests in Croatia are managed according to forest management plans since 1853, and according to forest law – the first one was from 1769.

Because of that, there was initiative of foresters who manage these valuable treasure and are also amateur photographers, to show to present their everyday work to public.

Their aim was to break down the stereotypical view of the forester walking through the forest with saw and axe in hand, and to acquaint the public with their work and with the forest itself – Croatia’s greatest natural, renewable treasure.

It has been 22 whole years since the Croatian Forestry Society’s Bjelovar branch office organised its first exhibition, “*The Forest in the Eyes and Hands of a Forester’s*”. The photos are judged by an expert jury; in recent years the jury`s job is becoming more difficult as the photographs submitted are now of such high artistic quality that it is very hard to rank the awards.

In the same year as Croatian forestry marks 255 years of organised forestry, and following runs in Finland in 2009 and New York in 2011, International Year of Forests, the exhibition is coming to Brussels for the Croatian Presidency of the European Union.

Apart from Croatian photographers, the exhibition to date has also featured numerous contributors from Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Czech

Republic, Slovakia and Canada, helping to promote forests as highly complex ecosystems, which are of immeasurable importance to life as a whole on this planet.

I will take this opportunity to thank to the foresters for their daily concern for this valuable resource whose value and beauty they wish to bring us closer.

I declare this exhibition opened, and also announce the **16th PHOTOGRAPHY SALON "FOREST IN FORESTER'S EYE"** competition officially opened.

Thank you!