Friday - April 20, 2007

9.00-10:50 **PLENARY SESSION 4** (WSTCEC:4th Floor Auditorium)

9:00-9:30

- **Botanic gardens as introduction centres for plants of economic importance**

Professor Vernon H HEYWOOD
Emeritus Professor, Plant Science Laboratories, School of Biological Sciences, University of Reading RG6 6AS, UK

Botanic gardens have played many different roles over the centuries. In recent years plant conservation has been a major focus and major advances have been made in that area. Historically, however, botanic gardens have been key centres for plant introduction, including many important crops, notably as part of the colonization process in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, however, those gardens that are engaged in plant introduction direct most of their efforts at plants of horticultural merit and plant exploration for this purpose remains active, for example, in the United States and the United Kingdom, while the cultivation and domestication of medicinal and aromatic plants is being undertaken by a number of gardens, notably in China and India. But it is perhaps time to revisit this whole area and take a broad look at the needs for introduction of plants of economic and social importance, especially in the light of global change, develop a coherent policy and assess what role the botanic garden community might play and how it could cooperate with the agricultural germplasm sector. Suggestions for achieving this are made. A critical reassessment should be made of the concept of acclimatization, the function of acclimatization gardens and societies and the part that the botanic garden community might play. The part that botanic gardens have played in the introduction of species that later escape and become invasive remains a serious concern but does not negate the key role of plant introductions for the world's economy.

Friday
9:40-10:10

- **Plant conservation in Malaysia – meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century**

Dr. Leng Guan Saw
Director, Tropical Forest Biodiversity Centre,, Forest Research Institute Malaysia, 52109 Kepong, Selangor, Malaysia

Malaysia has an estimated 15,000 species of vascular plants. Located in the Malesian region, its affinity is Sundaic; having common elements with Sumatra, Java and Palawan. Malaysia is geographically divided into two halves, Peninsular Malaysia extending from mainland Asia and the east Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak on the island of Borneo. Both these regions have their own distinct floristic components. Peninsular Malaysia has about 8,300 species of vascular plants while Sabah and Sarawak has an estimated 12,000 species. The rich plant diversity poses many challenges for plant conservation in Malaysia. The Malaysian flora is not completely known, Peninsular Malaysia has a working checklist, for Sabah and Sarawak, an obsolete checklist is available and the list badly requires updating. In the past, plant conservation has not been high on the nation's priority; very little species level conservation activities have been done. However, recent changes in the government have provided opportunities towards a more holistic approach for plant conservation in Malaysia. The Forest Research Institute Malaysia has led a number of important initiatives towards supporting such efforts. A national strategy for plant conservation for Malaysia has been developed; the strategy was developed in a consultative process in response to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. A phase approach towards documenting the flora of Malaysia has been adopted. The Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak which initiated in 1991 has completed 6 volumes and the project will continue for another estimated ten years. The Flora of Peninsular Malaysia started in 2005, provides a fresh revision of the total flora of West Malaysia. A checklist to enumerate the vascular plants of Borneo has started. On-going plant conservation projects include conservation status assessment and detail population studies of critically endangered plants. With the setting of Kepong Botanic Gardens (KBG), attempts are also been made to bring some of the threatened and rare plants in cultivation at KBG.

Friday
10:20-10:50

- **Botanic Gardens: Gateways to the Future**

Professor. Stephen BLACKMORE
FRSE, Regius Keeper, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

In the years and decades ahead, climate change, biodiversity loss and a set of complex, interrelated issues associated with the accelerating pace of environmental change will come to dominate our daily lives. As many observers have pointed out, our species has survived previous periods of dramatic climate change, such as the last ice ages. The challenges we now face are different. They confront a global community of over 6.5 billion people living in complex societies that occupy most of the habitable surface of our planet. Despite the enormity of the challenges, botanic gardens have a significant potential to contribute directly to tackling the conservation of biodiversity and its adaptation to the different conditions that will confront us in the future. Just as importantly, botanic gardens have a key role to play in urgently engaging with the public so that they can understand the ways in which the world is changing and what they and their families can do to make a difference. The question is, how can we increase the effectiveness of the botanic garden community so that it plays a greater part in the survival of the plant biodiversity on which we all depend and in empowering citizens to bring about a more sustainable relationship with our planet?