

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION



NEWS RELEASE

CHILDREN TARGETED IN NEW FOREST INITIATIVE

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, 10 July 2009: A meeting here today attended by about 900 people, including their Imperial Highnesses, the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Japan, heralded the launch of a new environmental education program by the International Tropical Timber Organization to better educate children around the world about the importance of forests in maintaining a healthy global environment.

ITTO is an intergovernmental organization with 60 members that develops and implements policies for sustainable tropical forest management and promotes the sustainable forest management. Since 1987 the Organization has provided grants worth over US\$330 million to fund over 700 projects designed to promote sustainable forest management, conservation and sustainable development.

The Children's Environmental Education Program (CEEP) launched today by ITTO aims to focus on tropical forest conservation as one of the most important issues to consider when addressing environmental problems, many of which are the result of an emphasis on development at the expense of the natural environment. Educating children on the importance of forests can be effective in pursuing a better balance between environment and development. While education systems in each country are established by respective governments and target different objectives, the environment is shared by all. It is necessary to educate the children of the world with a degree of coordination to achieve the CEEP goal of conserving tropical forests for a healthy environment.

Today's meeting was held in conjunction with celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the opening of the port of Yokohama and was attended by several City dignitaries including Mayor Hiroshi Nakada. Also in attendance were students from about 40 different countries. A selection of these students engaged in a lively discussion with Mayor Nakada, ITTO's Executive Director, Emmanuel Ze Meka and Dr. Masahiro Amano, Professor at University of Waseda. In his remarks, Mr. Ze Meka advised the children:

You are still young, but you are the leaders of tomorrow. You have to start assuming leadership now and accept responsibility if you want a better life tomorrow. Caring for nature will provide you with all the reflexes you need to build this better future. You can easily learn the gestures and actions that are needed in this connection, and ITTO's international Children's Environmental Education Program will accompany you in this endeavor.

ITTO's CEEP programme will commence activities in the areas of (1) Supplementary Teaching Materials; (2) School Forests; (3) Forest-Friendship Experience; (4) Learning Network; (5) Forest Education Camp; (6) Dispatch of Lecturers; and (7) Environmental Education Conferences in 2009-10.

For more information on the CEEP program, ITTO and/or the projects it supports, visit www.itto.int or contact itto@itto.or.jp.