

The opening session

The transboundary conservation of tropical forests is an idea that has arrived

Emmanuel Ze Meka

Executive Director, ITTO



Rapid progress? A TBCA project field team pushes its longboat over a tricky spot in the river, deep inside Malaysia's Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary on the border with Indonesia. *Photo: B. Diway*

It is a great honour and pleasure to warmly welcome you to the opening of the International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests. This conference is being organized by ITTO within the framework of the International Year of Biodiversity, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and IUCN and with the support of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Environment, Conservation International-Ecuador and Fundación Natura.

Transboundary conservation provides an effective framework for consultation, international cooperation and policy development. It can be a vehicle for improved trans-border relations. It can provide a mechanism for re-uniting peoples separated by political boundaries. And it can be used to engage Indigenous people and local communities in conservation and sustainable development opportunities.

Transboundary conservation can also provide a medium by which tropical countries, and Indigenous and local communities within them, can secure payments for the environmental services that tropical forests provide. Transboundary conservation forests have great potential, for example, for attracting payments for reduced carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation—known as REDD-plus.

Transboundary conservation areas can help to improve forest law enforcement and governance. The increased presence of national forest protection agencies in border areas and improved control mechanisms established through transboundary conservation projects discourage illegal logging and timber and wildlife smuggling.

For all these reasons, and others, transboundary conservation is an idea whose time has come.

It is not easy. It requires a considerable amount of cooperation and commitment at the highest levels of all involved governments. International organizations such as ITTO, the CBD Secretariat, IUCN and Conservation International help to foster such cooperation and commitment by facilitating dialogue between countries and—importantly—by funding activities.

The long-term commitment of donors is essential for the success of many transboundary conservation initiatives. The International Tropical Timber Council has, in a tangible way, shown its support for transboundary conservation in tropical forests over more than 15 years. I hope that it will continue to back the concept through projects and other activities.

Many local communities living in or near transboundary conservation reserves have limited options for generating income. If they are to support transboundary conservation they must be able to pursue credible livelihood opportunities, and they must be intimately involved in decisions on the management of the resource. Local people make wonderful partners in transboundary conservation, but it is essential that they have a strong incentive to be involved.

These are just some of the challenges facing transboundary conservation. There are many more, and no doubt this conference will canvass them all.

Transboundary conservation is an important, inclusive concept. I wish you all well in your efforts to promote it, at this conference and beyond.



H.E. Osamu Imai

Japan Ambassador to Ecuador

In October this year, the Government of Japan will host, in Nagoya, the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. We are convinced

that this conference will contribute significantly to the new post-2010 target on biodiversity and, as part of that, it is important to present the results of this conference there.

Japan is a long-time supporter of ITTO, including its work on transboundary conservation. Specifically it has provided more than US\$9 million to fund ITTO projects directly concerned with the conservation of biodiversity. Here in Ecuador, Japan is supporting the ITTO-funded Condor transboundary conservation project on the border with Peru, a project we will hear more about during the conference.



Daniel Grünenfelder

Responsible for Economic Affairs
Swiss Embassy in Ecuador

Protected forests in border lands are of the utmost importance for mankind. In addition to harbouring biodiversity, these forests

increasingly contribute to the alleviation of rural poverty by providing new opportunities for the economic development of non-timber products and environmental services.

The state of tropical forests gives cause for great concern. They are still being destroyed on a large scale. The tropical timber industry has been criticized for causing forest destruction, depleting biodiversity and paying insufficient attention to local communities. The International Tropical Timber Agreement has proven its worth as the only existing international instrument that seeks to reverse this trend by ensuring that the economic use of tropical timber is balanced with environmental and social care. Since the 1990s, ITTO has provided support for transboundary conservation over about 10 million hectares. In addition, forest conservation is contributing to the preservation of carbon stocks and climate-change mitigation. We are pleased that the implications of transboundary conservation for climate-change mitigation will be discussed at this conference.

Switzerland is a major supporter of ITTO's efforts in transboundary conservation. We believe that these projects have the potential to attract political support, not just for sustainable development and biodiversity conservation but also to address illegal trade in forest products.

Switzerland co-funded the first phase of the Peru–Ecuador transboundary conservation project, which aimed to contribute to peace through transboundary conservation and sustainable development for Indigenous and local communities. Switzerland also co-financed an ITTO project in the Tambopata–Madidi TBCA, which, in its first phase, generated and collected economic and social information for the establishment of coordinated participatory efforts between the two countries towards conservation and sustainable development.

It is exciting to see that experts from so many countries have come together to discuss and share experiences on transboundary conservation. I am impressed that nearly all the key stakeholder groups are represented—the public sector, the private sector, civil society, communities and research. This

is essential. Past experience has shown that projects have failed because they have not involved relevant stakeholders.

This conference is taking place when stakeholders are joining forces to combat illegal logging and related timber trade and to promote sustainable forest management. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that the outcomes of this conference are taken up.



Luis Alfaro Lozano

Head, Peruvian National Service for Natural Protected Areas

Ten years ago I participated in a technical committee between Ecuador and Peru to implement the agreement on protected areas on the border between the two countries. The project there, which is supported by ITTO, is very important for a number of reasons. By now, Peru has established 15 conservation areas in the area covering 2.5 million hectares and involving more than 50 000 inhabitants. Many of the areas belong to communities—a very important element. We need to consider how the area should become an opportunity for people.

We are still learning about what can be shared and exchanged across the border—the joint intent to conserve the corridor has started a process of cross-cutting cooperation. Many things have changed; people out there in the field are exchanging their experiences on a daily basis and we are facilitating those efforts. We have very interesting projects and it is very good for us to have this meeting in order to see what the mistakes have been, and where new opportunities can be found.



H.E. Marcela Aguiñaga Vallejo

Minister of Environment
Government of Ecuador

Some 19% of Ecuador is in protected areas. In recent years Ecuador has introduced a new program called Sociobosque, which

aims to involve local communities, farmers and Indigenous people in the voluntary conservation of fragile forest and arid-zone ecosystems through the payment of incentives. The program now covers 553 areas over more than 500 000 hectares, and the goal is to cover 4 million hectares, increasing by about 200 000 hectares per year. Much needs to be done, but as an Ecuadorian I am very proud of what has been achieved so far. It has been so successful that our neighbours are considering similar schemes.

We are also trying to improve the legal framework for the control and monitoring of forest operations, including through an initiative to establish a national system of forest monitoring.

We accept the challenge of conserving our forests, and I thank the organizers of this conference, and all its participants, for giving us the opportunity to discuss this challenge over the next three days. As Minister of the Environment I will review all the results that are attained here so that they may be implemented.

