

**Statement by the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) to the ITTO 59th Session held in
Pattaya, Thailand from 13-17 November 2023**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

CSAG would like to thank the Government of Thailand, the City of Pattaya and the ITTO for hosting this Council session.

CSAG hopes that the Council will agree to the extension of the ITTA 2006. We wish Council a speedy conclusion to the discussion.

CSAG hosted this panel SME-Community Forestry – Timber governance and trade issues focussing on small producers in traceable and transparent supply chains - challenges and opportunities as this is a very difficult and challenging topic for SME-Communities who manage their own community forests. We applaud the ED, Council and the Secretariat for giving CSAG this opportunity to organise a panel as part of the Joint Committee agenda and that this will be a regular feature from now.

We have heard that SME-CF faces a number of unique challenges and issues. There are now urgent requirements of strict traceability, adherence to legality – laws of the country of production, proper documentation, low level of skill in and awareness of sustainable harvesting and trade, habitat (forests) degradation and rehabilitation, the need to have reasonable operational cost, tenure security and value chain governance; all of which are affected by low levels of local control and transparency, which raises risks of corruption and illegality, while marginalising communities from the process and the benefit. IPLC's rights are also unclear in many areas, obstructing fair and equitable discussions and negotiations. Women have high levels of use of forest resources, but their involvement in formal operations is rarely at the decision-making level, and their access to financing is even further removed from their actual needs. Community Forestry must be strengthened with the participation of IPLCs in the discussion of how to operationalize the management in community areas as well as facilitate the access of the communities to forest concessions.

Focused efforts will be needed to ensure that new opportunities are available to, and benefit, women and SME-CF. CSAG is ready to assist. ITTO has funded CSAG members to participate in the Council, and we have representatives from the IPLCs present. We encourage Council members to speak to these CSAG women to better understand their needs.

We encourage the Council to also take into account our previous statements.

We look forward to working with ITTO on all these issues.

Thank you.

Chairs

Chen Hin Keong, TRAFFIC, Chair and official contact person for CSAG

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