

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION



**Welcome message from Dr Gerhard Dieterle, incoming ITTO
Executive Director**

International Conference on Sustainable Mangrove Ecosystems: Managing a Vital Resource for Achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement

18–21 April 2017, Bali, Indonesia

Excellences, Distinguished Participants,

As ITTO's incoming Executive Director, it is an honour to send you my greetings at the opening of the International Conference on Sustainable Mangrove Ecosystems.

Mangrove forests are among the planet's most productive and biologically important ecosystems, and they provide millions of people worldwide with food, shelter, livelihoods and income. They are under stress, however, from climate change, overuse, unsustainable management, and rapid conversion to agriculture, aquaculture and urban development.

The International Conference on Sustainable Mangrove Ecosystems, therefore, is timely and important.

The conservation, restoration and re-establishment of mangrove forests is a challenging task for humanity. But we have no alternative: mangrove ecosystem services are vital both at the global scale and for millions of coastal-dwelling people.

This conference will discuss important aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of mangroves, especially those related to the Sustainable Development Goals—such as SDG 14, on life below water—and the nationally determined contributions of countries to mitigating climate change in the framework of the Paris Agreement.

I expect the outcomes of your deliberations this week to contribute to the development of policies on the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems. I will keenly review your recommendations and bring them to the attention of the International Tropical Timber Council and other important international and national forums.

I am grateful to the conference host, the Indonesian Ministry of the Environment and Forestry, for its generosity, and for the opportunity to learn from Indonesia's vast experience in managing the world's single-largest mangrove resource.

I extend ITTO's appreciation to the International Society of Mangrove Ecosystems for co-organizing the conference and for putting together such an exciting programme. I also thank all speakers, moderators, rapporteurs and participants for coming here to share their insights and experiences.

I look forward to collaborating with you all and to building new partnerships through this conference towards a more sustainable future for mangroves and our planet.
