

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION



NEWS RELEASE

NEW ACCORD FOR TROPICAL FORESTS ENTERS INTO FORCE *International treaty will promote sustainable forest management in tropics*

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, 12 December 2011: The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) announced today the entry into force of the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006 (ITTA, 2006). The ratification of the agreement by the Government of the Republic of Benin on 7 December 2011 triggered the entry into force of this successor agreement to the Organization's current governing treaty (ITTA, 1994).

ITTO, which was created in 1983, aims to both conserve tropical forests and assist countries to develop economically. The treaty under which it operates – the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) – is renegotiated periodically to take into account changes in global forest policies and the world timber trade.

The ITTA, 2006 contains several changes that are likely to lead to significant improvements in ITTO's work. The Organization's longstanding philosophy of using tropical forests in a sustainable way for economic development is stated explicitly in the new Agreement. The two key objectives are:

“to promote the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests and to promote the sustainable management of tropical timber producing forests ...”

Related to the first objective, the Organization will, among other things, help improve the competitiveness of wood products relative to other materials, boost the marketing of tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested sources, and share information on certification and other aspects of the international timber market.

In pursuit of the second key objective, the Organization will help countries to improve forest law enforcement and governance, address illegal logging and related trade in tropical timber, and undertake sustainable forest management and forest restoration. It will also strengthen the capacity of countries to gather and report data on the tropical timber trade and forest management. The Agreement also acknowledges the role of ITTO in assisting countries to pursue sustainable development and alleviate poverty and encourages forest-dependent indigenous and local communities to achieve sustainable forest management.

ITTO relies for much of its work on funds contributed on a voluntary basis, up to now mostly by the governments of **Japan, Switzerland, the United States, Norway, the Netherlands** and the **European Union**. To help boost such contributions the new Agreement creates a sub-account for thematic programmes, which, some donors say, will lead to increased funding for specific areas of work. The Organization has been implementing four thematic programmes on a pilot basis over the past three years, with mixed levels of support from donors. It is hoped that funding for these and new thematic programmes will increase under the ITTA, 2006.

ITTO's Executive Director, Emmanuel Ze Meka, said that the new Agreement will help ITTO build on its past sustainable development achievements. “People want neither poverty nor environmental degradation,” he said. “ITTO believes that natural tropical forests can be both conserved for future generations and put to economic use to alleviate poverty and contribute to national development. The new agreement articulates this belief and gives material support for it through innovative funding mechanisms.”

Joachim Bilé, current chairman of ITTO's governing Council noted that many people think the conservation of tropical forests and the development of the tropical timber trade are mutually exclusive. “On the contrary, the one is essential for the other,” he said. “Without conservation there can be no long-term trade. Without trade, the forests will be cleared for agriculture because, one way or another, the people living in tropical countries will continue to demand economic development. ITTO's role has been, and will continue to be, to help governments, companies and communities to improve the management of their forests and the marketing of their products.”

The ITTA, 2006 will be in force for a period of ten years, with the possibility of extensions of up to eight years. Membership of ITTO (currently at 60 countries plus the EU) is expected to increase under the new agreement, with several new members having already ratified the agreement and others in the process of doing so.

For more information on ITTO and the ITTA, 2006 go to www.itto.int.