

# PRESS RELEASE

ITTO celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary during International Year of Forests



Yokohama, 28 October 2011. The Yokohama-based International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment in Yokohama, Japan today with a commemorative symposium that brought together high level officials from Japan and other countries, past and present friends of ITTO, and members of the public.

The symposium, “Celebrating a Quarter Century of ITTO and Japan Sustaining Tropical Forests”, was planned and implemented together with the City of Yokohama, the Japan Forestry Agency, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japanese Committee for the International Year of the Forest. It attracted nearly 200 people who heard details of

member country perspectives on the Organization, its successes in promoting sustainable forest management in the tropics, its history and evolution, examples of its current work program and prospects for its future development. Yokohama Mayor Fumiko Hayashi noted the many positive accomplishments of ITTO in opening the symposium, stating that she was proud of her City’s role in hosting “the only UN treaty-based organization headquartered in Japan.”

ITTO is an intergovernmental organization whose 60 members account for over 80% of all tropical forests and over 90% of the global tropical timber trade. ITTO’s mandate is to support the sustainable management of tropical forests and the sustainable trade of tropical forest products. ITTO has, with the support of the government of Japan, the City of Yokohama and other donors, funded over 1000 projects worth over \$350 million over the past 25 years. These projects have covered a wide range of activities throughout the tropics to contribute to the achievement of ITTO’s mandate to promote sustainable management of tropical forests.

Timber has to date been the most important economic output of tropical forests, but this is changing. Environmental services like carbon storage and biodiversity habitat are becoming increasingly important in global discussions on forests, although markets to pay for these services remain small or non-existent. The event in Yokohama today highlighted the important role that tropical forests play in the global environment and on-going changes in markets for tropical forest products and services. ITTO Executive Director Emmanuel Ze Meka noted these changes, calling on Japan as ITTO’s host country to “continue and expand support to the Organization to meet these and other emerging challenges for sustainability in tropical forests.”

ITTO has worked closely during 2011 with the City of Yokohama and other partners on special events to commemorate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the International Year of the Forest. In addition to today’s commemorative symposium, the Organization actively participated in the Yokohama International Festa on October 22-23. Activities included the display of (and awarding of prizes to) posters submitted to a contest for local school children organized by ITTO and the City of Yokohama. ITTO has also worked with several tropical countries on commemorative events to mark its anniversary during the year, including Brazil.



**Certified tropical timber in Pokola, Congo.**

Photo: E Mueller/ITTO



**Carbon stored in Iwokrama forest, Guyana**

Photo: Fotonatura



**Orang utan in Sabah, Malaysia**

Photo: M. Adams/ITTO

For more information on ITTO and its projects/programs, see [www.itto.int](http://www.itto.int).