

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION



NEWS RELEASE

FINANCIAL CRISIS, WORK PROGRAMME ON COUNCIL AGENDA

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, 9 November 2009: A new work programme for 2010-11 is likely to be adopted at the 45th session of the International Tropical Timber Council, which began today in Yokohama, Japan.

The Council is the governing body of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). It meets at least once a year to discuss a wide-ranging agenda aimed at promoting sustainable tropical forest management and the trade of sustainably produced tropical timber.

Emerging issues such as the impact of the recent financial crisis on the tropical forest sector and the relationship between climate change and tropical forests will feature in the Council's deliberations throughout the week. ITTO's Executive Director, Emmanuel Ze Meka, alerted Council to the impact of the economic crisis on the tropical timber sector, noting that "in some countries up to 50% of timber processing capacity has been shut down". The Executive Director also urged Council members to strengthen the Organization by ratifying the 2006 International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) and by providing adequate funding for administrative and strategic activities. Council Chairman Michael Maue also stressed the importance of countries ratifying the new ITTA, noting that it would be undesirable for the new agreement to enter into force with a reduced membership as compared to the current 1994 ITTA.

Also speaking at the opening session was Japan's Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Chinami Nishimura who stressed the importance of tropical forests, including in providing environmental services, and called for all members who had not done so yet to accelerate their process of accession to the ITTA, 2006. Yokohama Mayor Fumiko Hayashi also addressed the Council, noting the strong collaboration between her city and ITTO through events like the July 2009 Children's Environmental Conference. Mayor Hayashi pledged Yokohama's continuing support for ITTO.

Alhaji Collins Dauda (Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Ghana) also addressed the Council at its opening session, expressing concern over the impact of recent turmoil in global economies on the tropical forestry sector. Minister Dauda stressed the importance of the forestry sector to his country's economy and welcomed the prospect of additional ITTO assistance to Ghana in its efforts to achieve SFM through new thematic programs and in the framework of its voluntary partnership agreement to provide legal timber to the EU. Noting the outcome of a recent ITTO conference, he also called for increased inter-African trade in timber products.

The Council will also deal with several other key issues at its 45th session. The status of ratification of the ITTA 2006 will be reviewed, as will the implementation of the five ITTO Thematic Programmes approved at the 44th ITTC session, two of which (TFLET and REDDES) are operational. The Council will receive a report on progress towards meeting ITTO Objective 2000 for increasing the area of forests that are managed sustainably in Cameroon and will be briefed on collaborative initiatives on endangered/threatened tropical timber species with CITES. Council will also undertake its annual assessment of the world timber situation and, led by its Trade Advisory Group, will convene the annual market discussion, "Tropical Timber Markets at a Crossroads: Buyers' Perspective". Several other events are scheduled during the week, including a session on emerging market requirements for timber in the EU and the USA and a side event on tropical forest tenure convened by Council's Civil Society Advisory Group.

For more information on ITTO and the 45th Council session go to www.itto.int.