

Conferences like this can lead to real change

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ITTO Executive Director



Photo: Tetra Yanuariadi

The many benefits of forests are generally well known and understood, but knowledge of them has been insufficient to alleviate the pace of forest loss and degradation. According to the latest ITTO report on the status of tropical forest management, released in June this year, less than 10% of forests

in ITTO member countries are managed sustainably for production or conservation purposes. This is an improvement compared with the previous assessment in 2005, but not a significant one.

One of the main reasons for the slow uptake of sustainable forest management is the denial of or insufficient clarity on tenure of the lands where indigenous peoples and local communities are the main managers and dwellers and which they claim as their ancestral homelands. Communities are less inclined to contribute to the enforcement of forest laws, including those to combat illegal logging, if their rights are not properly recognized and they receive few benefits for doing so.

To help address this fundamental problem, ITTO, RRI and host governments convened the first ever international conference on forest tenure in Acre, Brazil, in 2007, followed in 2009 by a second conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in cooperation with the Government of Cameroon. At this third conference, here in Lombok, the specific objective is to catalyze action to advance tenure reform, improve forest governance and support community-based forest enterprises in Asia. It is directed not only at governments in tropical countries, calling for the initiation or continuation of reform of laws and procedures to empower local communities, but also at the international community, with a view to increasing support for reform processes and the management of forests by local and indigenous communities.

Andy White

Coordinator, Rights and Resources Initiative



Photo: Hwan Ok Ma

This is an important moment in Indonesia because the forest sector is on the cusp of tremendous change. Forest dwellers, investors, owners, politics and power are changing. We all sense the opportunity to shape these forces for the benefit of the citizens of the forests and the wider community.

We are still hearing about the outcomes of the first in this series of conferences on forest tenure, which was held in Brazil. The Brazilian NGO community has since forged a new agreement on community forestry, resulting in a new national council on community forestry, as well as new policies, programs and financial support.

In Cameroon it is a similar story. Despite the misgivings of many community members and government officials, over the course of the week they came together and agreed on new targets and a plan for moving forward. This has become a baseline in the region.

It is fair to say that none of us thought that those meetings would be so productive. Each was somewhat uncomfortable at the beginning, but, by the end, concrete steps for advancing tenure reform had been laid down.

Here in Asia, many forest-dependent people have customary uses and claims. There is also a high level of conflict. Women are disproportionately disadvantaged in forest areas and, with much weaker land, civil and political rights than men, they are particularly likely to be marginalized. The marginalization of women is a horrible scar on the forest sector that we must deal with if we are to move forward.

What is the best approach? How do we reduce conflicts? How do we bring more justice and rights to women? No country that has undertaken forest-tenure reform seems to regret it. Tomorrow is too late to start because reform will only become harder in the future as populations increase and as interest and investment in natural resources grows.

Hedar Laujeng

Chair, Community Chamber, Indonesia Forest Council



Photo: Tetra Yanuariadi

Indonesia has one of the largest forest areas in the world and is responsible for managing those forests as best it can. For that, support is needed from many parties, including the communities who live in and around the forest.

A number of obstacles hamper community participation. One of these is the laws and regulations that still have a colonial bias and do not favour local communities, including peoples whose ancestors lived in the forest well before this republic was established. This is nothing new. It occurs everywhere in countries that were built on the ruins of a colonial power. A second problem is the unresolved boundaries of forests. Most forest in Indonesia does not have clear boundaries, and that leads to conflict. In Indonesia today, we are in a transition from an authoritarian to a populist legal system. This was marked by an amendment to the 1945 national constitution, which also included specific provisions on human rights. Now a review and revision of laws are required, including those pertaining to forests.

The Ministry of Forestry is committed to resolving widespread forest-based conflict in its 33 provinces. We hope this conference will contribute ideas for realizing that commitment. It is an opportunity for us to exchange ideas and information, to learn from each other, and to build trust.

Zulkifli Hasan

Minister of Forestry, Indonesia



Photo: Ministry of Forestry

At the 46th session of the International Tropical Timber Council, convened in Yokohama in December 2010, it was decided that Indonesia would be the host and co-organizer, with ITTO and RRI, of this international conference. This was partly because Indonesia is playing a strategic role in addressing climate change in line with President Yudhoyono's commitment to reduce greenhouse emissions by 26% by our own means and 41% with the help of the international community by 2050. Indonesia is interested in changing its laws to address climate change and land tenure, including by engaging other stakeholders.

I would like to report that today we have with us a number of *bupati* or district heads, who will receive areas designated as community forests covering 89 124 hectares and village forests covering 11 834 hectares. In this regard it would be our honour if Your Excellency, Mr Vice-President, could witness the presentation of the decrees of the Minister of Forestry concerning the area designations.

The Ministry of Forestry will continue to promote the development of community forests, village forests, people's forests and people's forest plantations as approaches and mechanisms for resolving forest tenurial issues in Indonesia through the priority policy of empowering communities within and around forest areas.

Boediono

Vice-President, Indonesia



Photo: Ministry of Forestry

This is not the first time in history that mankind has faced resource constraints. Each time it has occurred, the challenge has been met through two modes: improved technology, and better institutional arrangements. It is no different now, except that the situation is more complex than it has ever been. The solution lies, as ever, in technology and institutions. This conference will focus primarily on

institutional aspects, especially the core issues of rights and tenure.

Some time ago the most blatant violation of good forest management was illegal logging. Since then, the government has made substantial efforts to curb this problem and it is now in decline, although it is still an issue in some areas.

Another problem is forest fire. The main cause is the practice of clearing forest by burning, but dry weather might be an increasingly important factor. When peat soils are burned they release large quantities of greenhouse gases. So we are placing an emphasis on the management of peat forests.

It is becoming clear that underlying many of these problems are systemic problems in governance. Therefore the government recently imposed a two-year moratorium on the issuance of licences to clear forest. This time will be used to improve the system, including through the development of more reliable forest and land-use maps, more transparency in the area of land rights and the resolution of tenure matters, and more effective monitoring. Moreover, we want to increase investment in carbon. None of this will be easy because it will involve coordinating between agencies that are used to working separately, but it must be done if the resource is not to be damaged irreversibly.

The primary goal of the Indonesian government is to raise the standard of living of people in a sustainable way. This means sustained economic growth of 7% per year. This is well within our reach and the capacity of our resources, provided we do the right things in at least two areas. We need a viable system of governance for managing our resources, including forests; and we need to use technologies to trade off between economic growth and the environment in an optimal way. In both the institutional and technological domains we are open to cooperation with other countries. I declare this international conference open.