



FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION
5 – 10 November 2012
Yokohama, Japan

**Developments as regards the
ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative to Conserve Tropical Forests
[Decision 6(XLVI)]**

[Item 17 of the Provisional Agenda]

Background

In the framework of the International Year of Biodiversity 2010 and the International Year of Forests 2011, the Secretariat of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 2 March 2010 to strengthen collaboration in the pursuit of their common objectives of conserving and sustainably managing tropical forest resources. In October and December 2010, respectively, the governing bodies of CBD and ITTC adopted Decisions welcoming the ITTO/CBD collaboration [Decision X/36 and ITTC Decision 6(XLVI)].

A key purpose of the MoU between the ITTO and CBD secretariats is to identify, develop and implement targeted joint activities on forests and biodiversity, with involvement of other relevant organizations, including the development of an ITTO support programme for the implementation of the CBD programme of work on forest biodiversity in ITTO producer member countries (subsequently referred to as the Joint ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity).

The programme document that is the basis for concrete project activities under the Joint ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity is available in English, French and Spanish and can be downloaded from both the CBD and ITTO websites.

Objectives and outputs

The overall objective of the Joint ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity is to enhance biodiversity conservation in tropical forests with the direct participation of local stakeholders, addressing the main drivers of biodiversity loss in tropical forests: deforestation and forest degradation. More specifically, the Initiative provides support to ITTO producer member countries to reduce losses of biodiversity through the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Forest Biodiversity, focusing on the common objectives of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the ITTO Action Plan.

This Initiative aims to achieve four key outputs, with the assistance of donors and with the close collaboration of partners in producer member countries:

1. Enhanced local capacity for biodiversity conservation in production forests and for the rehabilitation of degraded and secondary forests;
2. Improved conservation and management of protected areas, especially in association with buffering protected areas, and transboundary conservation;
3. Safeguarding tropical forest biodiversity in forestry interventions, including in REDD+ related projects; and
4. Improved welfare of local communities and indigenous groups through biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

These expected outputs of the Initiative are to be achieved through the promotion of sustainable forest management (SFM), with a particular emphasis on biodiversity protection; forest monitoring and adaptive management to generate multiple benefits on a sustainable basis; protection against invasive species; and enhancing the value of natural tropical forests to avoid land use change.

Focus on production and protection forests

The Initiative focuses both on production and protection forests. Scientists estimate that tropical forests host about two thirds of all terrestrial species. Promoting the establishment of protected areas, especially in forests of high conservation value including transboundary areas, is still required to meet the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 global target for 17% of terrestrial areas protected. Considering that only 13% of the world's forests are currently located in protected areas, it is essential to also promote the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity outside of protected areas. The conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests in general, buffer zones of protected areas in particular, are necessary for improving livelihoods of local communities and avoiding encroachment of the core conservation areas. The consumption of main timber products (roundwood, sawnwood, pulp, paper) is expected to increase over the next 30 years. The use of solid biofuels for electricity production could be three times larger by 2030 than current levels. Globally, by 2050, the demand for industrial roundwood is expected to increase by 50 to 75%. The **ITTO/IUCN Guidelines for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Tropical Timber Production Forests (2009)** reflect the clear importance in promoting biodiversity conservation outside protected areas, through the long-term sustainable use of forest resources for the sustainable livelihoods of local communities. Also, **the ITTO Guidelines for the Restoration, Management and Rehabilitation of Degraded and Secondary Tropical Forests (2002)** provides the elements to recover the biodiversity conservation capacity of degraded forests in the tropics. These ITTO guidelines are complementary to, and entirely support the CBD forest programme of work, providing guidance for the field implementation of the Initiative.

Operational Procedures

ITTO leads the implementation of the Initiative in close consultation with the CBD Secretariat, donors, other partners and especially the beneficiary countries. Interested countries may submit a concept note to the ITTO Secretariat indicating their intention to develop a project or specific activity in the framework of this Initiative. The CBD Secretariat and ITTO Secretariat will assess the pertinence of the request together with the relevant stakeholders of the proposing country and will support the formulation of a full project proposal (if required) and fund raising. Donors may allocate funds to a specific project of the Initiative, or as an unearmarked contribution to the Initiative.

Budget

The Collaborative Initiative has an estimated budget of \$US15 million for an initial period of 4 years (2012-2015), covering the three tropical regions of ITTO. The implementation of the Initiative benefits from the experience ITTO has gained in implementing projects and programs in the tropics (over 1,000 projects, pre-projects and activities in the last 25 years, amounting to ca. US\$400,000,000). Also, the ITTO/CBD Initiative benefits from the experience gained in ITTO programme development, including the ITTO/CITES Programme since 2007; and the ITTO Thematic Programmes being currently implemented on a pilot ITTO/CITES basis. The Initiative also builds on the experiences implementing CBD's Programme of Work on Protected Areas.

Funded projects

To date, three projects under this Initiative are being piloted with total budgets of over US\$ 9 million, of which donor governments, Japan (main donor), Switzerland and Belgium have contributed a total of US\$ 7,352,647 as of late 2012. Outlines and the current status of these three projects are as follows:

1. “Management of the Emerald Triangle Protected Forests Complex to Promote Cooperation for Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation Between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos”

Beneficiary countries: Cambodia and Thailand

Executing Agencies: The Forestry Administration of Cambodia together with Royal Forest Department of Thailand.

Inception date: August 2012

Overall, this three-year project (2012-2015) envisages conserving forest biodiversity in the Emerald Triangle Protected Forests Complex situated between Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR, under the framework of a trans-boundary biodiversity conservation area (TBCA). The Emerald Triangle has some of the most extensive unfragmented natural forests in Southeast Asia containing large numbers of globally threatened species as a last refuge for sixteen “Critically Endangered” and “Endangered” species from the IUCN Red List. Specifically, the project aims to strengthen the protection of trans-boundary habitats of the endangered wide-ranging wildlife species in the Emerald Triangle.

While this project has just commenced, both beneficiary countries are already collecting and exchanging information on wildlife distribution between themselves and are planning joint research activities on the regional biodiversity.

2. “Capacity Building for Sustainable Management of Tropical Rainforests and Biodiversity Conservation in the ITTO Congo Basin Countries”

Beneficiary countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Republic of Congo

Executing Agency: Network of Central African Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions (*Réseau Régional des Institutions de Formation Forestière et Environnementale d’Afrique Centrale - RIFFEAC*)

Inception date: April 2012

Overall, this five-year project (2012-2017) will contribute to building human resources capacities required to achieve sustainable forest ecosystem management in the Congo basin by reconciling social economic imperatives and the maintenance of ecological balances. More specifically, it aims to build the capacities of environmental and forestry training institutions in Central Africa to ensure they are capable to train personnel qualified to implement sustainable forest management, while ensuring the biodiversity conservation in the Congo Basin.

The project is currently developing the draft training modules in a participatory manner among professors in the region, which once completed and validated, will be internalized in the curriculums of the forestry and environmental schools established in the Congo Basin.

3. “Building Capacities of ACTO Member Countries in Ecologically Responsible Forest Management and Biodiversity Conservation in Managed Forests of the Amazon”

Beneficiary countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela

Executing Agency: Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO)

Inception date: To be determined in early 2013

The project intends to enhance biodiversity conservation and strengthen environmental guidelines in managed forests across the Amazon Region. Specifically, the project aims at establishing an

interdisciplinary process for building and delivering the technical capacity necessary for implementing ecologically responsible forest management in public and private production forests of the Amazon region.

Currently the 8 ACTO member countries are defining the details of the project's activities in order to finalize the project document and sign the agreement for the implementation of the project.

Further projects for Asia and Africa are currently being developed and under consideration for funding. Please consult the ITTO website periodically for updates.

Conclusion

Overall, the significant progress made in the collaboration between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) through the implementation of three projects covering 15 countries in the Amazon, Congo and Mekong River Basins, in the framework of the ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity, is already visibly contributing towards the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and in particular, the following Forestry-related Aichi Biodiversity Targets:

Target 5: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced;

Target 7: By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity;

Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes; and

Target 15: By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

However, it should be further noted that the budget of this Collaborative Initiative for its first 4 years still falls short of its target, and members of ITTO, Parties to CBD, other Governments and relevant organizations are invited to further support the Initiative, including through financial contributions.

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