



**International Expert Meeting on
Addressing Climate Change through
Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests**

Yokohama, 30 April – 2 May 2008

***Welcome remarks by
Emmanuel Ze Meka
Executive Director of the
International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)***

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am particularly honoured and delighted to welcome you all to this magnificent Hamagin Hall on the occasion of the international expert meeting on addressing climate change through sustainable management of tropical forests, organized by ITTO in cooperation with the Governments of Japan, Switzerland and Norway, and the City of Yokohama.

This important conference has been scheduled as one of a number of preliminary events that will lead up to the Fourth Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD IV), which will be held here in Yokohama, the Headquarters of ITTO, on 27-30 May 2008 and which will put emphasis on the issue of environmental protection and climate change.

This explains the African festive mood that you may have already noticed this morning while registering and the reference to TICAD IV. The conference, however, is relevant to the entire membership of ITTO. It has been organized in response to the International Tropical Timber Council's desire to clarify and illustrate ITTO's role in climate change adaptation and mitigation in relation to tropical forests and to assist members in formulating and implementing an integrated forest-sector response to climate change.

I am very pleased to note this morning that the issue at hand, the linkages between tropical forests and climate change, has attracted a very substantial and important audience. The quality of the attendees will certainly allow us to meet the expectations of ITTO's Council and member countries, and beyond that of the entire world as the issue of climate change is a critical one for all humankind.

In this connection, it my great pleasure to recognize and welcome the Chairperson of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC), Ms. Katharina Kumayer. Equally I am glad to welcome and express my deep appreciation for the presence of H.E. Mr. Kyoji Komachi, Ambassador of Global Environment Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

I also would like to welcome H.E. Mr. Koichi Fujishiro, Chairperson of the Yokohama City Council and Ms. Yumiko Noda, Deputy-Mayor of the City of Yokohama and put on record my sincere gratitude for the support of the City of Yokohama to ITTO in general and to this conference in particular.

I would like to express my appreciation for the presence of the members of the panel that has been established to further our discussions this morning: Dr. Akira Miyawaki, Director of the IGES-Japanese Center for International Studies in Ecology; Professor Masahiro Amano of the Waseda University of Japan, Mr. Yoshitsugu Minagawa, Deputy Director General of the Forestry Agency of Japan, Dr. Victor Agyeman, Director of the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, and Mr. Hiroyuki Kawaguchi of the Mainichi Newspaper of Japan, whose presence will certainly help inform the public about this conference and its outcome.

I would like to express my gratitude to the various presenters who have devoted time and energy to prepare quality papers for the meeting, including, but not limited to Mr. Tasso Azevedo, Director General of the Brazilian Forest Service, Dr. Jurgen Blaser of Intercooperation, Switzerland and Dr. Manoel Sobral Filho, the former Executive Director

of ITTO, whose involvement here is further testimony to his attachment to this Organization that he has served faithfully for so many years.

I would like to recognize the support of Collaborative Partnership on Forests member representatives, including FAO, CIFOR, the World Bank, CBD, UNFCCC, ICRAF and other parties that have taken time to come to this meeting. I am particularly gratified to see so many participants from our host country and city. This enthusiasm is certainly a testimony of their sensitivity to issues related to tropical forests and to climate change. This wide ranging participation underscores the importance and sensitivity of the issue of climate change which calls for the attention of, and needs inputs and commitment from, all branches of society (including indigenous and local communities and the private sector), governments, inter-governmental agencies, NGOS, and scientists. To all of you, I would like to thank you for coming.

I am confident that this conference will help generate and develop concrete ideas to curb deforestation and forest degradation and to further strengthen the sustainable management of tropical forests as a means of contributing to adaptation and mitigation of climate change. It will also lay the groundwork for ITTO to assist its member countries in this regard in coming years.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like now to leave the floor to the ITTO Information Officer, Mr. Collins Ahadome, who will take us through this morning's opening ceremony.

Thank you for your kind attention.