

**Opening Remarks by Ms Katharina Kühmayer (Austria),  
Chairperson of the International Tropical Timber Council for 2008 at the  
Opening of the International Expert Meeting on Addressing Climate Change Through  
Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests  
30 April – 2 May 2008, Yokohama, Japan**

Mr. Emmanuel Ze Meka, Executive Director of ITTO,  
Ms. Yumiko Noda, Deputy-Mayor of Yokohama, Japan,  
H.E. Mr. Kyoji KOMACHI, Ambassador for Global Environmental Affairs, Japanese Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs,  
Distinguished guests and participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour of welcoming you all today to the opening of the International Expert Meeting on Addressing Climate Change through Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests in the comfort of the excellent facilities of the Hammagi Hall here in the city of Yokohama, where the Headquarters of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) is located. As the current Chair of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) and on my own behalf, please allow me to put on record our deepest appreciation to the Governments of Japan, Switzerland and Norway, the City of Yokohama, Japan International Cooperation Agency as well as the Mainichi newspaper for their generous support for the convening of this important Expert Meeting.

The theme of this meeting is “Addressing climate change through sustainable management of tropical forests”. This is an important issue to all of us, particularly for the work of ITTO since tropical forests have enormous potential to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. It is quite a surprise to learn that according to the Stern Review (2006), land use, mostly deforestation accounts for about 18% of current global greenhouse gas emissions – more than the 14% estimated as arising from the global transportation sector.

The Stern Review states that curbing deforestation is a highly cost-effective way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the potential to offer significant reductions fairly quickly. Therefore, actions to tackle tropical deforestation and to sustainably manage the remaining areas of tropical forests are urgently required. Sustainable management of tropical forests will also provide benefits such as biodiversity conservation and livelihoods for forest-dependant people. Afforestation and reforestation of degraded forest lands could help mitigate climate change by increasing carbon stocks while simultaneously providing many ecological and socio-economic benefits.

I am sure that many of us are now aware of the “Bali Action Plan” agreed upon at the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), convened in December 2007 in Bali, Indonesia. The Bali Action Plan is a roadmap for a new negotiating process to lead to a post-2012 international agreement on climate change that should be concluded by 2009. The Bali Roadmap focuses on the development of appropriate policy approaches and positive incentives that would lead to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) as well as the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in the mitigation of climate change.

In light of ITTO’s accumulated experience and contributions towards sustainable management of tropical forests and thereby to climate change mitigation and adaptation through its policy and project

work, I believe it is highly desirable that ITTO should play a leading role in assisting tropical countries to navigate the Bali Roadmap towards a sustainable carbon future. As Chair of the ITTC, I am proud to note that over the past two decades ITTO has developed internationally agreed policy documents to promote sustainable forest management and has assisted tropical countries in the adoption of such policies to be implemented in the field. For instance, ITTO's *Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests* and *Revised Criteria and Indicators for the Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests* are important benchmarks for the quality of forest management in the tropics. With regards to the rehabilitation of secondary tropical forests and maintenance of carbon sinks, ITTO has published *Guidelines for the Restoration, Management and Rehabilitation of Degraded and Secondary Tropical Forests* which are being widely applied in many tropical countries.

ITTO is also an active member of the CPF - the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. We praise CPF's members' initiative to build up a Framework Strategy to improve synergies and the multiplier effects of joint actions in the field of forests and climate change, as agreed in the latest CPF meeting on the theme, held in Rome earlier this month.

While this International Expert Meeting is expected to provide clarity and inputs to ITTO in advancing its policy work and project activities relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation, it also contributes meaningfully to upcoming international fora and events on climate change. This includes the upcoming Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) to be held next month here in Yokohama. A focal theme of TICAD IV is "Addressing environmental issues and climate change". Considering the urgent need for international assistance to Africa in the sustainable management of tropical forests, it is hoped that this Expert Meeting will devote adequate time to discuss what could be done at the regional level to achieve our goals related to SFM and climate change. In this respect, I would like to emphasize the importance of the work of our African regional working group to be established during this meeting to identify practical forestry mitigation and adaptation strategies as input to the TICAD IV process.

I also sincerely hope that the outcome of our Expert Meeting will provide useful inputs to the G8 Hokkaido-Toyako Summit to be held in July 2008, considering that there is growing recognition of the important role of tropical forests in addressing global challenges such as stabilizing climate change, protecting biodiversity and tackling poverty reduction of forest-dependant people.

As climate change continues to dominate discussions at many international fora, I believe it is urgent for ITTO to develop a strategy on how its work impacts climate change issues thereby raising its relevance and profile at the international level. In particular, I wish to emphasize the importance of developing practical proposals on how to incorporate and integrate REDD and carbon sequestration into the concept and implementation of sustainable management in tropical forests; and proposals to the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) on integrating forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation into its policy and operational work and for supporting its member countries in developing feasible implementation schemes. It is equally important that ITTO and its member countries ensure that sustainable forest management is recognized as an eligible activity for any funding mechanisms established under a REDD scheme or other mechanisms in any post-Kyoto climate change agreement.

In this connection,, it is hoped that a draft ITTO programme on climate change and sustainable forest management can be formulated at this meeting so that it can be further reviewed at the ITTO meeting on "Operational modalities of future work of the ITTC" to be held from 9-12 June 2008 in Accra, Ghana. By the Forty-fourth Session of ITTC in November 2008 in Yokohama, I trust ITTO will have a

sound programme on climate change in the context of sustainable forest management that can attract increased funding from a broader base of donors to enable the Organization to assume its increasing role in this field.

Climate change is a threat, but at the same time it offers a great opportunity to the tropical forest sector. I have every confidence that with the active participation of all of you, this Expert Meeting will be able to address the urgent need for the development and implementation of forestry mitigation and adaptation measures and other actions to enhance the role of tropical forests in maintaining a healthy carbon balance and planet.

On a final note, I hope that the partnerships and networks established here in Yokohama will be maintained and strengthened to serve as a solid foundation for the development and implementation of forestry mitigation and adaptation action in the tropics.

I thank you all for your kind attention.