

# Interview with Josefina Takahashi

**Josefina Takahashi was head of the Peru delegation at the International Tropical Timber Council in 1999, and she was chair in 2001. She continues her involvement in the Council as a member of either the Peru delegation or the Civil Society Advisory Group**



Photo: J. Leigh/ITTO

## **What were the major challenges the Council dealt with during your term as Council chair?**

The Council made several important decisions in 2001 [see box]. Some of them had been debated in previous sessions, but consensus had not been achieved—these included decisions on illegal logging and trade, certification, and criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management [C&I]. Therefore, it was important to establish a good working atmosphere and to provide good facilities for members' participation, which was done thanks to the excellent work of the ITTO Secretariat.

## **Describe the atmosphere in the Council at that time.**

As Duncan Poore wrote in his book, *Changing Landscapes*: “The Council entered 2001 in a very positive mood, and by the end of the 31st session had good reasons to be satisfied with its achievements”.

In my experience, the atmosphere of the Council has always been constructive, but at that time the members of both consumer and producer countries were very keen to maintain a collaborative and positive approach to ensure the adoption of some very important decisions. In 2001 it was clear that the most important commitment in the International Tropical Timber Agreement 1994, the Year 2000 Objective, was still far from being achieved. It was recognized that even though most producer countries had made significant progress in the formulation and adoption of policies related to the Objective, more actions were needed for their implementation. Member countries recognized the need for consumers and producers to work together and to make special efforts to raise the capacity of tropical countries for a more diverse and integrated

approach to sustainable forest management [SFM] and to add value to products traded in international markets.

## **Describe the major achievements of the Council under your leadership.**

The Council adopted, by consensus, several very important decisions in that period. They did so only after very intense and constructive work by delegates, always looking to protect tropical forests while also improving the socioeconomic and environmental conditions of indigenous and other local people living in producer countries. Particularly contentious was a decision on forest law enforcement in the context of sustainable timber production and trade, but in some ways it was this decision that cleared the way for a more open and constructive dialogue on this issue in other forums as well. The Council also made important decisions on auditing systems for SFM, the adoption of a new action plan, and several other issues. It was a very dynamic period in the Organization.

## **What were the impacts of those achievements?**

The impacts of these achievements have been increased awareness among world leaders and policymakers in most producer and consumer countries of the importance of sustainable tropical forest management, forest law enforcement, the application of guidelines for C&I in auditing systems, mangroves conservation, and so on. The ITTO Yokohama Action Plan was an important step in increasing efforts towards SFM by producers through incorporation in national plans and by consumers through additional financial support.

Without doubt, tropical forests are now high on the agenda of member countries, considering that even though

tropical forests cover only 12% of the planet, they are home to more than 50% of known plant and animal species. There is also increased awareness of climate change and the role of tropical forests in mitigating this. Nevertheless, to ensure the full impact of Council decisions, there is an urgent need for substantial additional financial support from ITTO consumer countries to continue to promote and implement SFM, add value to tropical forest products and enlarge markets for producer countries.

### What are the Council's major strengths?

The major strengths of the Council are its composition, the balance in voting power between producer and consumer countries, the participation of civil society, and the adoption of most decisions by consensus. The consumer and producer caucuses are also major strengths.

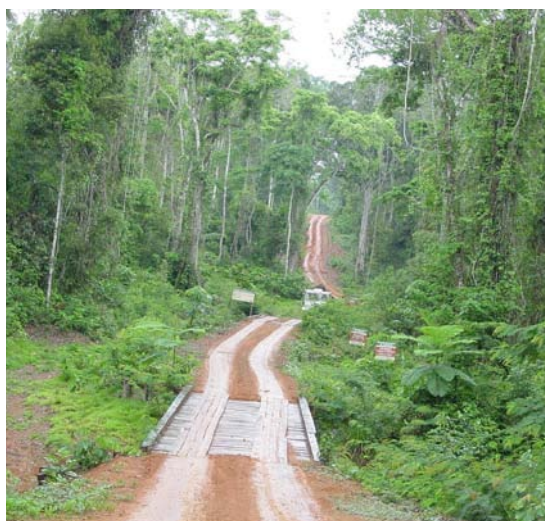
### What are its weaknesses?

The Council could be strengthened by continuous, ongoing communication among Council members, not only at its annual meetings. Council members, especially past chairs, could support the work of the Secretariat and current chair at important national or regional events related to the ITTO mandate. The participation of ITTO in important forums relevant to tropical forests is limited by the small size of the Secretariat. The Council needs to find innovative ways to support the work of the Secretariat.

### What do you see as the future role of the Council?

The Council should play a more active role in international forest and environmental policy; therefore, it needs to evaluate very carefully the Organization's future. It should seek to change its name to the "International Tropical Forest Organization", because for most policymakers and the general public, the current name seems to limit the scope to timber production, which is also confused with "deforestation", even though the International Tropical Timber Agreement is much more broad than that. This would help in obtaining more funds for the important work of the Organization.

The Council should increase its promotion of SFM, as well as of timber and non-timber forest products, agroforestry, natural forest management and certified plantations of high-market-demand species in deforested areas under the control of forest authorities. It should analyze forest laws in producer and consumer countries and promote the best elements of them. The Council should also promote programmes for innovation and the transfer of technology from developed to developing member countries, and create technical service centers for small producers, including in Amazon countries.



**Long road:** In 2001, Council members recognized the need to raise the capacity of tropical countries for SFM and to add value to products traded in international markets. *Photo: H.O. Ma/ITTO*

#### 1 Major decisions at the 30th session of the Council (May 2001)

- Guidelines for management of secondary tropical forest, restoration and rehabilitation of degraded forest land
- Independent certification (promotion, policies, special schemes, etc.)
- The role of ITTO in international and regional organizations
- Programme support fund of the Special Account and the Bali Partnership Fund
- Reporting formats and training for ITTO C&I
- Cooperation between ITTO and FAO: international conference on C&I
- Cooperation between ITTO and IUCN
- Strengthening SFM in the Congo Basin

#### Major decisions at the 31st session of the Council (November 2001)

- Forest law enforcement in the context of sustainable timber production and trade
- Adoption of Yokohama ITTO Action Plan 2002–2006
- Guidelines for establishing auditing systems for ITTO C&I for SFM
- Mangrove forest ecosystem work plan 2002–2006
- Strengthening SFM and controlling illegal logging in Indonesia
- Establishment of database on statistics on trade of bamboo and rattan