



## Concept Note

### **ITTO Second Regional Workshop on ITTO Voluntary Guidelines for the sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests**

**08-12 May 2017, Cotonou, Republic of Benin**

#### **Background**

For almost three decades, ITTO has strived to assist its tropical member countries, through policy and project work, in implementing SFM on the ground to promote the sustainable supply of tropical forest goods and environmental services. The International Tropical Timber Council adopted Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests in 1990 as ITTO's first policy guidance document on the management of natural tropical forests. SFM is defined by ITTO as "the process of managing forest to achieve one or more clearly specified objectives of management with regard to the production of a continuous flow of desired forest products and services without undue reduction of its inherent values and future productivity and without undue undesirable effects on the physical and social environment." This definition of SFM emphasizes that forest-related activities should not damage the forest to the extent that its capacity to deliver products and services - such as timber, water and biodiversity conservation - is significantly reduced. SFM should balance the needs of different forest users so that its benefits and costs are shared equitably.

Building on such work, ITTO has subsequently generated a wide range of policy guidance, including its criteria and indicators for sustainable tropical forest management and a phased approach to tropical forest certification. In 2014, the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC), the governing body of ITTO, adopted the Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests<sup>1</sup> which supersedes the 1990 guidelines. The new voluntary guidelines are designed to serve as guidance for addressing the policy, legal, governance, institutional, ecological, social and economic issues that need to be taken into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation of SFM in natural tropical forests to ensure the sustainable provision of forest goods and environmental services.

While the concept and knowledge of sustainable forest management (SFM) has been widely spread in the tropics, advancement of SFM is crucial to ensure the increased roles of tropical forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and local community development. In particular, increasing the role of tropical forests in climate-change mitigation and adaptation has been recognized a global priority action in the context of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries, or known as REDD+ which has been part of the Paris Agreement which was adopted at UNFCCC COP21 in Paris, France in December 2015.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.itto.int/direct/topics/topics\\_pdf\\_download/topics\\_id=4330&no=0&disp=inline](http://www.itto.int/direct/topics/topics_pdf_download/topics_id=4330&no=0&disp=inline)

Addressing forests under the proposed Sustainable Development Goals<sup>2</sup>, which are the post-2015 development agenda, is highlighted in SDG 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”. In the proposed SDG 15, forest-specific targets are identified as follows:

- 15.2: By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and increase afforestation and reforestation
- 15.b: Mobilize significantly resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management, and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance sustainable forest management, including for conservation and reforestation

Therefore, an important challenge for many tropical countries includes more effective implementation of SFM through increasing the competitiveness of SFM and the generation of more revenues from forests. This requires the strengthening of enabling policy, legal and institutional arrangements and forest-related good governance and management. In addition, there is a need for improved knowledge of environmental services provided by tropical forests as they are a promising opportunity to create value to forest resource and to prevent forest loss, particularly in the case of natural tropical forests.

For African natural tropical forests, ITTO had jointly developed with the African Timber Organization (ATO) a set of harmonized ATO/ITTO Principles, Criteria and Indicators (PC&I). This set of ATO/ITTO PC&I is promoted through the implementation of the regional project PD 124/01 (M) titled: “Promotion of sustainable management of African forests”.

As a new global set of ITTO Criteria and Indicators (C&I) was adopted by the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) in 2016, in consistency with the ITTO Voluntary Guidelines for the sustainable forest management (SFM) adopted by ITTC in 2015, this regional workshop will be an opportunity for the technical analysis of the ATO/ITTO PC&I in correlation with these two important ITTO policy documents. The aim of that technical analysis should be to contributing to the following aspects:

- Taking stock of the use of ATO/ITTO PC&I for the national assessment of progress towards SFM;
- Taking stock of the use of ATO/ITTO PC&I for the technical audit in forest concessions;
- Identifying the gaps in the ATO/ITTO PC&I to be filled for the purpose of consistency with the 2016 set of ITTO C&I; and
- Identifying the gaps in the ATO/ITTO PC&I to be filled for the purpose of consistency with the ITTO Voluntary SFM Guidelines.

## **Organizers of the workshop**

The Cotonou regional workshop, in Benin, is being co-organized by the ITTO Secretariat and the Direction Générale des Eaux, Forêts et Chasse (DGEFC) with the support of the Ministère du Cadre de Vie et du Développement Durable of the Republic of Benin.

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<sup>2</sup>Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsproposal>

## Objectives of the workshop

The Cotonou workshop in Benin aims to contribute to more effective implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM) of ITTO member countries in Africa Region. Specifically, the workshop intends to:

- Review concept of SFM and key issues of sustainable management of natural tropical forests;
- Stimulate the application of the ITTO Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forest for the development and implementation of national and sub-national guidelines for SFM;
- Discuss main challenges and lessons learned for designing and implementing SFM at local and national levels in Africa;
- Identify recommended actions for national-level initiatives for effective implementation of SFM in Africa; and
- Analyze the ATO/ITTO Principles, Criteria and Indicators (PC&I) in correlation with the 2016 set of ITTO C&I and the ITTO Voluntary SFM Guidelines.

To ensure informed discussions and outcomes for the workshop, the ITTO Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forest and the 2016 set of ITTO C&I will be the main reference to the workshop. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about these Guidelines and C&I in order to share their SFM experiences and views. The Cotonou workshop is based on the implementation of ITTO Biennial Work Programme 2015-2016: Activity 4 “Promote the publication, dissemination and application of the ITTO Voluntary Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests”.

The outcome of the Cotonou workshop will be reported to the ITTC at its 53<sup>rd</sup> Session in Lima, Peru, from 27 November to 2 December 2017.

The First Regional Workshop on ITTO Voluntary Guidelines for the sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests was held for ITTO member countries in the Asia-Pacific Region on 17 - 20 August 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in collaboration with the Forest Department of Peninsular Malaysia and the Forest Research Institute Malaysia with support of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Malaysia. Its outcomes were presented to the ITTC at its 51st Session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2015.

**Language of the workshop:** French and English

## Participants

It is expected the Cotonou regional workshop will be attended by around 25-30 participants. Invited member countries in Africa are: Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Madagascar, Mozambique, Republic Congo and Togo.

*Due to the budget constraint of the workshop, sponsored participants will be limited, in priority, to the ITTO Focal Points or relevant designated substitute person, as well as to selected experts already involved in the promotion of the ATO/ITTO PC&I through the implementation of the regional project PD 124/01 (M).*

## Contact Points

### **Mr. LOKOSSOU Achille Orphée**

Ingénieur Forestier

Gestion des Forêts et des Ressources Naturelles

National Coordinator of PP-A/52-315 (Workshop National Coordinator)

Tel (00229) 95 45 07 24 / 21 06 17 49

BP 2014 Ab-Calavi (Rép. du Bénin)

E-mail: [lokossou@yahoo.fr](mailto:lokossou@yahoo.fr)

### **Mr. AHIMIN Olivier**

Project Coordinator of the ITTO regional project PD 124/01 (M)

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

E-mail: [ahiminolivier@yahoo.fr](mailto:ahiminolivier@yahoo.fr)

### **Mr. MASUPA KAMBALE Polycarpe**

Projects Manager, Division of Forest Management

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

1-1-1 Minato-Mirai, Nishi-Ku, Yokohama 220-0012, Japan

E-mail: [masupa@itto.int](mailto:masupa@itto.int)

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