

**Statement by  
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on the occasion of the  
International Day of Forests  
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## **Choose sustainable tropical wood for people and the planet**

The value of tropical forests for their biodiversity, contributions to climate-change mitigation and adaptation, and role in the livelihoods of millions of people is well known.

But much less acknowledged is the important role that the tropical timber industry plays in our quest for a healthy planet when based on sustainable forestry. Using sustainably produced tropical wood products is a responsible choice for environmentally conscious consumers.

Tropical timber has many laudable features—such as durability, aesthetic appeal and strength. When used in long-life products and installations such as in construction (indoor and outdoor applications) and furniture, it stores carbon for decades and even centuries, thus helping mitigate climate change. Tropical wood products also help reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by substituting for more polluting and less environmentally friendly materials. The sustainable harvesting of tropical timber adds value to forests while conserving them, providing much needed revenue for implementing sustainable forest management (SFM).

Nevertheless, tropical timber and tropical wood products are locked in a battle for market share with metals, concrete and plastics, as well as non-tropical woods. In some markets, perceptions of tropical forestry as a cause of forest degradation and loss continues to hinder the sector. For many consumers, especially in developed countries, tropical timber brings to mind images of forest degradation and deforestation.

The International Day of Forests 2022 is the perfect occasion to assert the message that harvesting tropical timber sustainably is *not* deforestation. More than ever, we need to strengthen the role of sustainable forestry, including sustainable wood production and especially consumption, to build back better sustainably post-COVID-19 and in the face of current global disturbances.

SFM has always been at the core of ITTO's work, and it is essential for ensuring that wood is produced legally and sustainably. SFM enables the continuous flow of forest products and services from forests while maintaining forest values, productivity and the resilience and renewal capacity of forests; ensuring the conservation of forest soils, water, carbon stocks and biodiversity; supporting food security and the cultures and livelihoods of forest-dependent communities; and ensuring the equitable sharing of benefits arising from forest use.

SFM is a vital element of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 (“sustainable consumption and production”). Legal and sustainable supply chains—ensuring that supply-chain actors adhere to the principles of legality and sustainability—are appropriate means for achieving the aims of SDG 12. They minimize negative environmental and social impacts by addressing issues such as pollution, the treatment of workers, gender equity, biosecurity, marginalized people, biodiversity and land use. At ITTO, we are encouraging such positive environmental and social outcomes through our Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains Programme.

Shifting the focus to sustainable consumption by providing market access and the balance needed for sustainable production is critical for the existence and future of tropical forestry. Choosing sustainably produced tropical wood over other, less environmentally friendly materials is crucial for the long-term health and vitality of the planet. Encouraging responsible choice requires ramped-up efforts at all scales and from all actors. ITTO will continue working with its members and partners towards this end.