



**INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL
TIMBER COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION AND FOREST MANAGEMENT**

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**REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER COUNCIL FROM
THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON
REFORESTATION AND FOREST MANAGEMENT**

Item 1 - Opening of the Session

The Fifty-seventh Session of the Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management (CRF) was opened on 15 November 2023 by Mr. Jorge Mario Rodríguez (Costa Rica), Vice-Chairperson of the CRF for 2023. Mr. Jorge Mario Rodríguez chaired the Committee in lieu of Ms. Alicia Grimes (USA), the designated Chairperson of the Committee for 2023, who could not attend due to family emergency matters.

The list of participants is presented in Document ITTC(LIX)/Info.2.

Item 2 - Adoption of Agenda and Organization of Work

The Provisional Agenda for the CRF, as contained in Document CRF(LVII)/1 Rev.1, was adopted by the Committee. To expedite proceedings, the Agenda items 4, 6, and 9 were considered at the Joint Session of the Committees convened on 14 November 2023 in order to ensure that all agenda items are covered within the limited time available to the Committee. The Chairperson of the CRF proposed to organize the Session in the following order: Item 3, Item 5, Item 7, Item 8, Item 10, Item 11, Item 12, Item 13, Item 14, Item 15 and Item 16.

Item 3 - Admission of Observers

The Committee admitted the observers listed in Document ITTC(LIX)/Info.3 Rev.1 as approved by the Council.

Item 4 - ITTO Annual Market Discussion - 2023

The Committees noted the summary of the ITTO Annual Market Discussion – 2023, held in the Joint Session of All Committees as part of the Trade and Markets Day on 14 November 2023, as contained in Appendix A to Document CEM-CFI(LVII)/5. The theme of the Market Discussion was “Tropical Timber Industry: Challenges and Opportunities from Changing Priorities”. Mr. Rupert Oliver (TAG Co-coordinator) moderated the Market Discussion.

The following feature presentations were made during the Market Discussion (available at <https://www.itto.int/ittc-59/presentations/>):

Dr. Preecha Ongprasert Royal Forest Department, Thailand	<i>Thailand Timber Industry: Challenges and Opportunities from Changing Priorities</i>
Dr. Lyndall Bull Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Italy	<i>The Role of Forests and Forest Products in a Bioeconomy Transition – Supply and Demand Perspectives</i>
Mr. Stephen Midgley Salwood Asia Pacific, Australia	<i>Community Engagement and Smallholders as Pillars for Southeast Asian Forest Investment and Regional Wood Supplies</i>
Mr. Nobutaka Isoda, Tsukuba Research Institute Sumitomo Forestry Co., Ltd., Japan	<i>Mass Timber in the Building industry</i>
Dr. Richard Eba'a Atyi CIFOR-ICRAF, Cameroon	<i>Smallholder Timber Supply for Domestic and Regional Markets in Central Africa: Importance and Challenges</i>
Mr. Franz-Xaver Kraft GD Holz Service GmbH, Germany	<i>EU Deforestation Regulation: Implications for Producers and Importers</i>
Mr. Nils Olaf Petersen European Timber Trade Federation (ETTF) Germany	<i>EUDR and Actions Taken by ETTF</i>

The Committees further noted the statement of the Trade Advisory Group (TAG) presented during the Market Discussion as contained in Appendix B to Document CEM-CFI(LVII)/5.

Item 5 - Policy Work

The Committee considered the progress in the implementation of the following policy-related matters:

(i) Dissemination of the ITTO Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics [Activity 11 (b), ITTO Biennial Work Programme 2021-2022]

The Secretariat informed the Committee on the progress made in the implementation of this Activity as follows:

- The ITTO Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics were developed in 2020 with the invaluable support of many members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), including CIFOR, FAO, IUCN and IUFRO.
- Recognizing the importance of disseminating these ITTO FLR guidelines, a series of webinars was organized for Latin America and Caribbean, as well as the Asia-Pacific regions in 2020-2021. In July 2023, ITTO, in collaboration with the Asian Forestry Cooperation Organization (AFoCO), organized an online workshop titled 'Forest Landscape Restoration in the Asia-Pacific Region: Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification in Forest Carbon Assessment'. The workshop enriched participants' understanding of the MRV in forest carbon assessment and the role of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement in promoting FLR.
- Building on ITTO's strong commitment to FLR, the assessment of the thematic group focusing on FLR projects was carried out in 2023 and its outcomes were presented by the consultant (Ms. Suneetha Subramanian, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability) at the joint sessions of the Committees convened on 14 November 2023. The assessment report was produced as a policy report titled "Advancing Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics: Experiences and Lessons for Socio-Ecological Resilience and Empowerment of Women in the ITTO Projects".
- In the draft Biennial Work Programme (BWP) 2024-2025, this critical activity is incorporated to further strengthen ITTO's efforts to advance the restoration of degraded tropical forest ecosystems.

In the discussion, the Delegation of the USA recognized the collective efforts to promote FLR and recommended the continued promotion of the ITTO FLR guidelines to support the achievement of the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration. The Delegation of Germany pointed out that the market discussions held at the joint sessions of the Committees covered the issues of industry demand side, but supply chains were not sufficiently addressed, He recommended the future FLR discussions cover the aspects of sustainable production and supply sides. The Delegation of India introduced the country's ecosystem restoration commitments and strategies, as well as the development of the domestic markets. He highlighted the significance of promoting ecosystem restoration in line with global initiatives.

The Committee recommended that the Secretariat proactively promote the ITTO FLR guidelines to contribute to the achievement of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030.

(ii) Joint ITTO-CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity / Programme document 2024-2025 [Decision 6(XLVI)] [Document CRF(LVII)/4]

The Secretariat informed the Committee on the progress made in the implementation of this Activity as follows:

- In February 2021, ITTO and CBD renewed the MoU until 2025. This extension reflects the joint commitment to conserve biodiversity, implement sustainable forest management, restore degraded forest landscapes, and promote the sustainable use of forest resources. It facilitates capacity building to implement the ITTO/IUCN Guidelines for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Tropical Timber Production Forests and other relevant guidelines and policies of CBD and ITTO.
- The achievements of the ITTO-CBD Collaborative Initiative supporting 16 projects in 23 tropical forest countries included:
 - the expansion of a Peruvian mangrove protected area by more than 700 000 hectares;
 - a better understanding of animal movements and habitat conservation in the Emerald Triangle Forests between Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand;
 - more than 120 hectares of mangrove forest planted in Fiji; and
 - more than 400 foresters in Central Africa trained in sustainable forest management.
- To share insights gained from the ITTO-CBD Collaboration Initiative, the Secretariat organized a side event in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat at CBD COP 15 in Montreal, Canada in December 2022 and another side event during UNFF 18 in May 2023.

- The Program Document for 2024-2025 for the ITTO-CBD Collaboration Initiative prepared as Document CRF(LVII)/4 to outline joint activities to enhance sustainable capacity building, thereby contributing to the achievement of the tropical forest-related goals and targets outlined in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Regarding the transboundary cooperation in the Emerald Triangle Forests between Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand, Prof. Yongyut (Kasertsat University, Thailand) made a presentation on the main achievement of this transboundary project.

In the discussion, the Delegation of Japan emphasized the potential contribution of ITTO to the achievements of many targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, in particular Target 3 (30x30), which ensures that by 2030 at least 30% of land and ocean are protected through other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). The Delegation of the USA questioned the sustainability of the project in the Emerald Triangle Forests. In response to this question, the Secretariat mentioned that the cooperation platform has been well established with the engagement of three universities' biodiversity experts and the executing agencies are seeking extended activities through funding opportunities such as the Global Environment Facility. The Delegation of Cambodia expressed its appreciation to the governments of Japan, Switzerland and the USA for providing financial supports to the Emerald Triangle Forests project and recalled the implementation of this transboundary project by overcoming border conflicts. The three executing agencies seek additional funds for conservation of social-ecological production landscapes within regional initiatives, including the Green Mekong Initiative. The Delegation of Thailand commended this subregional partnership as a very successful model for other countries.

The Committee endorsed the ITTO-CBD Collaborative Initiative's Program Document 2024-2025 to facilitate the effective implementation of the ITTO-CBD Collaborative Initiative. Furthermore, the Committee recommended ITTO's continued efforts to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in tropical timber production forests to contributing to the achievement of the forest-related goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

(iii) Adapting the 2006 ITTO Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) to African context / Editing and printing for dissemination and information sharing [Decision 2(LIII)] [Activity 7 (b), ITTO Biennial Work Programme 2021-2022] [PP-A/55-336 / BWP 18-19/8b C&I Africa]

The Secretariat reported to the Committee on the progress made in the implementation of this Policy Work related Activity as follows:

- The Committee was recalled that the final version of the 2006 ITTO Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) adapted to African context was posted on the ITTO website for comments by ITTO Members, and by the deadline of 1 November 2022 there were no comments. Therefore, the approved document on adapted set of ITTO C&I is henceforth considered as the reference to continue disseminating and promoting SFM good practices in Africa's tropics.
- With additional funds provided by Japan Forestry Agency, the Secretariat has finalized the lay-out of the English e-version which is posted on ITTO website and is available with the title "*ITTO criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of African tropical forests*" through the following link: https://www.itto.int/direct/topics/topics_pdf_download/topics_id=7661&no=1&disp=inline. The document is being translated into French and the e-version is to be posted on ITTO website, as soon possible. The hardcopies in 2 ITTO working languages of the Africa region (English and French) will be ready by end of year 2023.
- The Secretariat is seeking additional funds, through the next Biennial Work Programme (BWP) for 2024-2025, for holding two regional workshops for the dissemination of the 2016 ITTO Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), which was revised and adapted to African context.

The Delegation of the Australia acknowledged the importance of ITTO Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), as other international C&I Processes (Montreal Process for boreal forests and Pan European Process for temperate forests), to be considered as reference for monitoring SFM and promoting good SFM practices in the tropics.

The Delegation of Japan commended the work of Secretariat for the finalization of the 2006 ITTO Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) adapted to African context and encouraged its dissemination in African ITTO member countries for wider use as an important technical tool for SFM good practices.

The Committee reiterated the importance of this new set of ITTO C&I adapted to African context and informed the Committee that this BWP Activity is part of the draft BWP 2024-2025 for seeking funds for its dissemination in African ITTO member countries.

(iv) Revision of the ITTO Guidelines on Prevention and Management of Forest Fires based on the findings of the two forest fire projects in Indonesia (PP-A/56-340-1) and in Peru (PP-A/56-340-2)

The Secretariat informed the Committee on the progress made in the implementation of this Policy Work related Activity as follows:

- The two BWP-based Forest Fire projects in Indonesia and Peru in 2021 and 2022, generously funded by the Government of Japan, were instrumental in increasing the capacity building efforts in the two countries. The comprehensive outcomes of these two fire projects were presented at the Committee session last year.
- These fire capacity building projects contributed to improving coordination and cooperation between national, regional authorities and local communities. They not only enhanced coordination in preventing and responding to forest fires, but also substantially promoted the capacities of government agencies, fire brigades and local communities in both Indonesia and Peru.
- ITTO is currently a member of the Global Wildland Advisory Group of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and International Liaison Committee (ILC) of International Wildland Fire Conferences. Our commitment extended to supporting the participation of ITTO projects fires experts in these International Wildland Fire Conferences, including 6th in Korea in 2015, the 7th in Brazil in 2019, and the most recent 8th International Wildland Fire Conference held in Portugal in May 2023.
- ITTO's involvement in these International Fire Conferences has been instrumental in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise on wildland fire policies, research, and management.
- The draft BWP Activity for 2024-2025 include forest fires and the Committee will continue its deliberations on forest fires in the coming years.

A representative from the Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA), Ms. Chayarine Jiawaragul, made a presentation on GISTDA's fire-related work utilizing satellites for forest fire monitoring, developing early warning systems, and identifying open-burning locations via a sensor network and drones.

In the discussion, the Delegation of India highlighted the key outcomes of the recent UNFF Country-led Initiative meeting in Dehradun, attended by more than 80 participants, in which wildfires were discussed as one of the two topics. The recommendation of this meeting included scaling up deployment of remote sensing-based measures, and digital alert systems, enhancement of involvement of civil society in awareness and capacity building training, and promotion of regional and international cooperation for management of transboundary forest fires. The Delegations of the USA and Australia highlighted the importance of ITTO engagement in supporting to the Global Fire Management Hub,

Recognizing the extended work of forest fires, including the promotion of the ITTO forest fire guidelines, the Committee recommended ITTO's collaboration with the newly established Global Fire Management Hub to enhance knowledge sharing and information dissemination in this global platform.

Item 6 - Report of the Expert Panel for Technical Appraisal of Project Proposals

The Joint Session of All Committees considered the report of the Fifty-eighth Virtual Expert Panel for Technical Appraisal of Project Proposals presented by panel member Ms. Akiko Tabata (Japan), as contained in document ITTC/EP-58 (presentation available at <https://www.ito.int/itc-59/presentations/>).

The Fifty-eighth Panel appraised seven (7) proposals, including one proposal (PD 934/23 (F) 'Strengthening the conservation of the critically endangered Rosewood (*Dalbergia* spp.) in Dakrong Nature Reserve and Dong Nai Conservation Landscape, Viet Nam') resulting from a concept note submitted under previous calls for concept notes under ITTO's new financing architecture-phase II in accordance with Decision 4(LVI). The Panel noted that:

- Five (5) project proposals (72 percent of the total) were commended to the Committee for final appraisal with minor modifications required (category 1);
- One (1) project proposal (14 percent of the total) will be sent back to proponents for essential revisions, rated as category 2;

- One (1) project proposal (14 percent of the total) received a category 4, indicating that the Expert Panel does not commend it to the Committee for approval as it requires complete reformulation.

Item 7 - New Projects and Pre-projects

The Committee noted the projects and pre-projects that were approved under the time-bound electronic no objection procedures to accept the Expert Panel's ratings and circulated to member countries pursuant to Decision 6(XLIII), as contained in Annex to Document ITTC/EP-58, following the recommendations of the Expert Panel at its 58th Meeting as follows:

Fifty-eighth Expert Panel

Category 1:

PD/PPD NUMBER	TITLE	SUBMITTING COUNTRY
PD 925/22 Rev.2 (F)	Support to the Local Communities of the Mono Plain for the Promotion and Sustainable Management of Community Forests in Togo	Togo
PD 934/23 Rev.1 (F)	Strengthening the Conservation of the Critically Endangered Rosewood (<i>Dalbergia spp.</i>) in Dakrong Nature Reserve and Dong Nai Conservation Landscape, Vietnam	Vietnam
PPD 203/23 Rev.1 (F)	Support for the Promotion and Sustainable Management of Community Forests in the Oti Plain, Togo	Togo

Item 8 - Report on Completed Projects and Pre-projects and Biennial Work Programme-based Activities

[Document CRF(LVII)/2]

The Committee considered the completed projects contained in Document CRF(LVII)/2 and noted that no project, one pre-project and two Biennial Work Programme-based activities were to be declared complete by the Council.

8.1 Completed Project(s)

None

8.2 Completed Pre-project(s)

- 1) **PPD 201/21 Rev.1 (F) Study for Capacity Building of Private and Community Tree Farmers in Benin (Benin)**

The Committee took note that the implementation of this pre-project, which was funded by the Government of USA, had mainly contributed to collect data with a view to developing a capacity-building project for private and community tree farmers in southern Benin. The future project, which will intend to contribute to the sustainable management of private forests in Benin for improving the living conditions of local populations, was not formally submitted because Benin was not eligible to the 2023 ITTO project cycle due to the arrears of contribution to the ITTO administrative account.

The Secretariat informed the Committee that the Completion Report, Technical Reports and the Final Financial Audit Report had been delivered by the Executing Agency in accordance with the Pre-project Agreement. The Committee therefore decided to consider the pre-project PPD 201/21 Rev.1 (F) as completed.

8.3 Completed Biennial Work Programme-based Activities

- 1) **PP-A/54-331 Enhancing Conservation and Sustainable Management of Teak Forests and Legal and Sustainable Wood Supply Chains in the Greater Mekong Sub-region**

The Committee took note that the project was developed based on the lessons from the evaluation of ITTO teak related projects, and it received financial support from the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL). The project had assisted governments, local communities, and smallholders in enhancing

natural and plantation teak forest management, production and marketing. The project's effort had contributed to the establishment of legal and sustainable wood supply chains and the improvement of the livelihoods of local communities as well as regional cooperation for sustainable development of the teak forest sector in the region.

The Regional Project Leader, Prof. Yongyut (Kasertsat University, Thailand), made a presentation summarizing the key achievements of this BWP-based Activity. His highlights include the following:

- Conservation of teak genetic resources by improving seed production areas and trials in Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand. It also established demonstration plots for sustainable forest management and silvicultural systems in the five countries.
- Field training programs strengthened community-based teak forest management and agroforestry systems in all participating countries. Additionally, two teak value chain analyses in Thailand and Vietnam enhanced smallholders' access to capital and market information for primary processing industries.
- Enhanced regional and international collaboration through webinars, workshops, and participation in the 4th World Teak Conference. A special "ITTO Teak in Mekong Session" was organized during the conference, releasing a comprehensive book titled "Teak in Mekong for a Sustainable Future," authored by experts from participating countries and invited scientists.

The Delegation of Togo inquired about the wood properties and qualities of teak harvested in short-rotation cycles such as 20-25 years versus long-rotation cycles. The Secretariat noted ongoing research on the quality of short-rotation teak wood and highlighted the potential for teak plantation owners to diversify rotation cycles based on market demand. The Delegation of India highlighted the need to promote both short and long rotation cycles to meet the growing demands of the domestic market, including for furniture and construction purposes. He underscored ITTO's roles in promoting quality timber production from teak plantations through the selection of quality clones.

The Delegation of Germany stressed the importance of ongoing discussions on better understanding of teak markets such as German markets for high quality teak products. The Delegation of Cambodia thanked Germany for financing the teak project, and pointed out that a pilot case for intensive teak cultivation is underway in his country and highlighted the need to provide supporting financial mechanisms for smallholders adopting extended rotation cycles for quality timber production.

The Committee noted that all requirements for the completion of this BWP-based Activity have been met in accordance with the rules and procedures of ITTO. The Committee therefore decided to consider the BWP-based Activity PP-A/54-331 as completed.

2) PP-A/56-341A Support for Women's Groups with the Restoration of Forest Landscapes in the Prefectures of Blitta and Lacs, Togo - Phase II

The Committee took note that the implementation of this BWP-based Activity, which was funded by Soka Gakkai of Japan, had mainly contributed to consolidating and sustaining the support to women's groups in two of Togo's poorest Prefectures of Blitta and Lacs, where forest restoration and enrichment planting have taken place during Phase I on identified plots made available by the chieftaincy of two villages (Agouegan village of Lacs Prefecture and Pagala-gare village of Blitta Prefecture). It specifically contributed to improving food security, meet the needs in fuel energy and generate income from wood and non-wood forests products, including food crops derived from agroforestry activities, while empowering women groups involved in the implementation of the second phase of this BWP-based Activity.

The REFACOF representative, Ms. Rose Pelagie MASSO, made a presentation summarizing the main achievements and outcomes of this BWP-based Activity. Her presentation led to the comments made by the representative of UNFF congratulating the implementing team for sharing interesting lessons learnt on women empowerment in the target area of Togo while warning that some income generating activities, such as the production of gari (process food derived from cassava) could be considered as a cause of deforestation. This inquiry was addressed by the representative of REFACOF who explained that women groups have been restoring forest lands already degraded by using modified taungya agroforestry system (combining trees with food crops in relation to the needs of local communities). It was supported by the Delegation of Cote d'Ivoire where a similar project is implemented by an association of women called MALEBI.

The Committee further noted that all requirements for the completion of this BWP-based Activity have been met in accordance with the rules and procedures of ITTO. The Committee therefore decided to consider the BWP-based Activity PP-A/56-341A as completed.

Item 9 - Ex-post Evaluations

(A) Ex-post Evaluation Reports [Document CRF(LVII)/5]

The Joint Session of Committees considered this item. The Committees recalled that a thematic group evaluation of FLR projects was carried out by one consultant [Ms. Suneetha Subramanian, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)] to assess the achievements of selected 14 completed and on-going ITTO projects in FLR. The focus of this evaluation was to assess the impacts of integrating gender perspectives, particularly the empowerment of women in these ITTO projects in relation to the ITTO Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics and the ITTO Policy Guidelines on Gender Equality and Empowering Women.

The consultant made presentation on the outcome of the assessment of selected ITTO FLR projects. She highlighted the Policy Report titled “Advancing Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics: Experiences and Lessons for Socio-Ecological Resilience and Empowerment of Women in the ITTO Projects”. Her highlights include the following: Project success relies on embracing local perspectives and inclusive approaches, prioritizing community wellbeing in forest restoration. All initiatives adapt interventions to suit local contexts, evident in extensive consultations with diverse stakeholders. However, only four projects go further by integrating gender-sensitive strategies. This includes training women in activities like tree nursery development, identifying product opportunities, and involving them in monitoring forest landscape restoration efforts.

The Committees took note of the report of the assessment of 14 selected FLR projects contained in document CRF(LVII)/5 and commended the excellent work of the consultant in synthesizing the results of the selected projects and publishing the policy report. The importance of empowerment of local communities and women in forest landscape restoration was highlighted by the Chairperson of the Joint Session of Committees.

(B) Selection of Projects for Ex-post Evaluations 2024

The Secretariat recalled the Committee that, at its last Session, some projects in the shortlist of ex-post evaluations 2022-2023, as contained in Document CRF(LV)/5, including three completed projects dealing with forest landscape restoration (FLR) in African ITTO member countries, had been subject to ex-post evaluation, for information sharing purpose during the Eighth Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD-8) which was held in Tunisia, on 27-28 August 2022.

The planning of the ex-post evaluation, in 2024, will give the priority to the Thematic Group Evaluation on Forest Rehabilitation / Landscape Restoration / Secondary Forest Management, excluding the three completed FLR-related projects already assessed within the framework of the abovementioned ex-post evaluation for TICAD-8, as well as those assessed on impacts integrating gender aspects with FLR. In addition to the abovementioned remaining projects under the FLR thematic group for ex-post evaluation, it is planned for 2024 to carry out the ex-post evaluation of the two completed forest fires projects implemented in Indonesia and Peru:

- Capacity Building on Forest and Land Fire Management in Indonesia (PP-A/56-340-1),
- Forest Fire Prevention and Response in Tropical Forests and Forest Plantations in Peru (PP-A/56-340-2).

The Committee also took note that the selection of projects for ex-post evaluations for the years 2025-2026 will be presented to the Committee during its 58th Session in 2024, where the thematic groups for evaluations will be determined for consideration by the Committee.

Item 10 – Review of Projects, Pre-projects and Special Biennial Work Programme-based Activities in Progress [Document CRF(LVII)/3]

The Committee was informed that the Secretariat’s report and the Committee’s discussion were limited to the following projects, pre-projects and activities in order to expedite proceedings, in accordance with the Section VI of Annex A to Decision 4(XXV):

- Those having implementation problems;
- Those requiring additional funds;
- Those requesting extension of more than six months beyond the original duration; or

- Those requesting essential major modifications of the work plan and budget.

10.1 Projects

The Committee took note of the status of projects that had been approved by the Council, as contained in Document CRF(LVII)/3, categorized as: (A) projects under implementation (eight projects); (B) projects awaiting implementation agreement (five projects) and (C) projects awaiting financing (nine projects).

(A) Projects under implementation

The Chairperson informed the Committee that 8 projects are currently under implementation, as contained in Document CRF(LVII)/3. The Chairperson informed the Committee that the Secretariat used to report some projects having implementation problems. In line with this, the Committee was updated on the following projects:

PD 452/07 Rev.5 (F) Sustainable Management of Production Forests at the Commercial Scale in the Brazilian Amazon – Phase II (Brazil)

The Secretariat reported to the Committee that this project has been implemented by Embrapa Amazônia Oriental (EMBRAPA), Belém, Pará State, Brazil. The project has consolidated Tools for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM Tools) and built capacity of training centres and universities of the Amazon region to transfer the SFM Tools for responsible forest management. The project has expanded partnerships with regional initiatives to promote sustainable timber production. Collaborations now include the Observatory of Community and Family Forest Management and the Amazon Forest Forum, a coalition of more than 40 members, including private companies, research institutions, associations, cooperatives, and indigenous representatives. The Secretariat presented a project video entitled “Our Sustainable Forests for A Sustainable Future”.

The Committee noted the importance of the empowerment of local community in forest management and encouraged the successful completion of the project early next year.

PD 836/17 Rev.2 (F) Enhancing Capacity of Local Communities and Forest Administration to Effectively Implement Community Forestry Programme (CFP) in Kratie and Mondulkiri Provinces of Cambodia (Cambodia)

The Secretariat informed the Committee that the Executing Agency has focused on enhancing the capacity of local communities and the Forest Administration to effectively implement CFP in Kratie and Mondulkiri provinces, rich in forest resources but face the challenges of the highest deforestation rate. The expected outputs of the project are: i) improvement of the capacity of local communities and forest administration in forest management planning, ii) promotion of the capacity of local communities to operationalize approved forest management plans, and iii) improvement of the capacity of Forest Administration in monitoring and reporting of forest operations by individual Community Forestry Management Units (CFMUs).

The Delegation of Cambodia expressed its appreciation to the donors: the Republic of Korea, Japan and the USA and informed the Committee that the Forestry Administration has been committed to enhancing the promotion of community forestry programmes through the country and the development of CFP guidelines by the project is leveraging the advancement of the national community forestry program.

The Committee noted the importance of the empowerment of local community in forest management and encouraged the effective and successful implementation of the project.

PD 902/19 Rev.3 (F) Management of Upper Baram Forest Area for Conservation and Sustainable Development with Involvement of Local Communities, Upper Baram, Sarawak, Malaysia (Malaysia)

The Secretariat reported to the Committee that the final project document was approved in October 2022 through the online no-objection procedure and the project secured financing from the following donors: Japan, City of Basel, Switzerland, the Bruno Manser Funds (BMF) and Unearmarked. Subsequently, the project agreement governing the implementation of the project was duly signed in March 2023 and the Executing Agency initiated project activities in September 2023. The first PSC meeting was held in late September with extended participation of stakeholders from the target local communities and discussed ways

to improve the effective participation of PSC members to govern the implementation of the project. In October 2023, the Secretariat received a letter from the BMF regarding their concerns about the core content, governance, civil society involvement and forest certification in the UBFA project.

The Delegation of Malaysia emphasized the significance of the UBFA project for Sarawak, highlighting its role in promoting models for multipurpose management of forest resources with active engagement of local communities. The Forest Department Sarawak is fully committed to the efficient and successful implementation of the project and looks forward to the productive progress in implementing project activities. However, the success of the project is subject to the full cooperation of all partners, including the donors.

Recognizing the importance of stakeholder involvement, the Committee urged enhanced consultation among all partners involved in the UBFA project to promote the Upper Baram Forest Area's conservation and development.

(B) Projects awaiting implementation agreement

1) PD 916/21 Rev.2 (F) Pilot Sustainable Management Systems for Secondary Natural Forests in the Collective Afro-descendant Community Territory of the Bajo Calima Community Council, Municipality of Buenaventura, Colombia (Colombia)

The Secretariat reported to the Committee on the progress made in the process for establishing the project agreement as follows:

- The Committee was recalled that this project was partially financed with an amount of US\$200,000, thanks to the generous contribution of Japan during the inter-session period between ITTC 58 and ITTC 59, in addition to the amount of US\$250,000 already secured from the USA in two tranches (US\$150,000 at ITTC 57 and US\$100,000 at ITTC 58). As the project was still considered as partially funded, with the amount of US\$450,000 out of US\$578,185, it was revised to reduce the ITTO budget to the secured total amount of US\$450,000 by appropriately adjusting planned project activities.
- The Committee was informed that the revised project was approved through the electronic time-bound approval system in March 2023, for its implementation in two stages as follows:
 - Stage 1 of 12 months with the ITTO budget of US\$200,000 from the Japan's supplementary budget (with the compulsory pre-condition/requirement allowing to use the funds of the Japan's supplementary budget within a maximum period not exceeding 12 months until March 2024),
 - Stage 2 of 12 months with the ITTO budget of US\$250,000 from the USA contribution through ITTO project regular cycle.
- The Committee was also informed that the draft project agreement, which shall regulate the implementation of this project, was sent to the Colombian project contracting parties, in April 2023, for review and signature. The signing process of the project agreement has been delayed, since April until October 2023, because of the long internal procedure among Colombian project contracting parties.
- The Committee was further informed that after several months of delay, the project executing agency (University of Tolima) sent an e-mail message, on 5 October 2023, to inform all contracting parties that it is impossible to implement the Stage 1 during the remaining 6 months (until March 2024) as required for the Japan emergency funds. Subsequently to this message sent by the University of Tolima, a virtual meeting was convened on 18 October 2023 for the assessment of the situation by all project contracting parties. It was recommended that the Government of Colombia should directly interact with the Government of Japan, through diplomatic channel. The conclusion of their discussion could be shared with the Secretariat, in due time, so that the Secretariat should inform both project donors (Japan and USA), for the purpose of getting appropriate advice/guidance.

The Delegation of Colombia thanked Japan and the USA for their financial contribution to this project, as well the Secretariat for its efforts of mediation on the signing process of the agreement which shall govern the implementation of this project. She reiterated the importance of this project for its expected impacts in relation to gender issues and support to afro-descendant communities living in the project target area of Colombia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia is interacting with Colombian project contracting parties for an appropriate solution to the problem delaying the completion of the signing of the project agreement.

The Chairperson encouraged ITTO to continue the mediation after receiving the results of the ongoing discussion among Colombian project contracting parties on the signing process of the agreement which shall govern the implementation of the project PD 916/21 Rev.2 (F).

2) PD 927/22 Rev.2 (F) Development of an Information System on the Potential of Wood and Carbon to Support Sustainable Forest Management in South Kalimantan, Indonesia (Indonesia)

The Secretariat informed the Committee that the project, originated from the concept note (CN-21002/CN-523), obtained approval through the online no-objection procedures in August 2023. The project aims to enhance the planning and monitoring sustainable forest management practices in South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Currently, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry is in the process of reviewing the draft project agreement.

The Committee urged the Executing Agency to expedite the speedy conclusion of the signing of the project agreement for the prompt commencement of the project.

3) PD 931/23 (F) Promoting SFM and Local Wood Consumption through Capacity Building and Improving Regulation in the North Zone, Costa Rica (Costa Rica)

The Secretariat reported to the Committee on the progress made in the process for establishing the project agreement as follows:

- The Committee was informed that this project, which is derived from the Concept Note CN-21005 after the expression of interest of Korea in financing it at ITTC 58 in November 2022, was approved through the electronic time-bound system, as the Secretariat did not receive any objection from ITTO Members by 7 August 2023.
- The Committee was also informed that the project agreement, which shall regulate the implementation of this project, was duly signed by all parties in November 2023. The first installment, which is required for the commencement of the project implementation, will be disbursed by the Secretariat upon receipt of an acceptable Inception Report associated with a Detailed Work Plan.

The Delegation of Colombia thanked the Government of Korea for the financial contribution to this project, as well Secretariat for its support and guidance during the conversion of the concept note into a project proposal. He informed the Committee that the project agreement was symbolically signed by the President of Costa Rica during his visit of the project target area on the border with Nicaragua to show the political support to this project which will contribute to support local communities in their efforts for implementing good SFM practices as forest smallholders.

The Committee urged the Executing Agency to expedite the submission of an acceptable Inception Report and associated Detailed Work Plan required for the disbursement of the first installment needed for the commencement of the project implementation.

4) PD 932/23 (F) Assessment and Dissemination of Knowledge and Experience for Ex-Situ Conservation and Plantation of Caoba in Northern Coastal Area, Peru (Peru)

The Secretariat reported to the Committee on the progress made in the process for establishing the project agreement as follows:

- This Committee was informed that this project, which is derived from the Concept Note CN-22014 after the expression of interest of Korea in financing it at ITTC 58 in November 2022, was approved through the electronic time-bound system, as the Secretariat did not receive any objection from ITTO Members by 7 August 2023.
- The project agreement, which shall regulate the implementation of this project, was duly signed by all parties in November 2023. The first instalment, which is required for the commencement of the project implementation, will be disbursed by the Secretariat after the review of the Inception Report associated with a Detailed Work Plan submitted by the project Executing Agency.

The Committee took note that the project could commence its implementation after the disbursement of the first installment by the Secretariat

5) PD 934/23 Rev.1 (F) Strengthening the Conservation of the Critically Endangered Rosewood (*Dalbergia* spp.) in Dakrong Nature Reserve and Dong Nai Conservation Landscape, Vietnam (Vietnam)

The Secretariat informed the Committee that the project, originated from the concept note (CN-21007), received approval through the online no-objection procedures in October 2023. The project aims to enhance the long-term conservation of the threatened rosewood species in Vietnam through active engagement of local communities. Currently, the draft project agreement is being reviewed by the relevant authorities in the country.

The Committee urged the Executing Agency to expedite early completion of the signing of the project agreement for the prompt commencement of the project.

(C) Projects awaiting financing

The Committee noted that the following nine projects approved at earlier and current sessions were still awaiting funding, out of which five projects with an asterisk (*) will be sunset between the 57th and 58th CRF Sessions if funding is not made available.

- 1) PD 712/13 Rev.3 (F) Enhancing the Implementation of Landscape Management of Giam Siak Kecil-Bukit Batu Biosphere Reserve (GSK-BR) in Riau Province of Sumatra Island, Sumatra - Phase II (Indonesia) [\$248,154.00]
- 2) *PD 765/14 Rev.4 (F) Development of A Forest Landscape Restoration Program for Guatemala Based on ITTO Guidelines – Phase II (Guatemala) [\$351,944.00]
- 3) PD 808/16 Rev.5 (F) Conservation of African Barwood (*Pterocarpus Erinaceus* Poir) in the Gazetted Forests of La Palee and Boundiali in Northern Côte d'Ivoire with the Participation of Local Communities – Phase II (Côte d'Ivoire) [\$246,488.00]
- 4) *PD 903/19 Rev.2 (F) Management of Sungai Menyang Conservation Area for Orangutan Protection and Uplifting Community Livelihood, Sarawak, Malaysia (Malaysia) [Partial funding \$121,903.50] [\$509,040.00]
- 5) PD 905/19 Rev.3 (F) Providing Support for the Sustainable Management of the Fosse-aux-LionsGazetted Forest in the Savanna Region in Togo - Phase II (Togo) [\$282,624.16]
- 6) *PD 915/21 Rev.2 (F) Strengthening the Rehabilitation and Sustainable Management of Sacred Forests in Ramsar Sites 1017 and 1018 in Benin (Benin) [\$512,402.00]
- 7) *PD 921/21 Rev.2 (F) Support for the Conservation and Promotion of Forest Tree Seeds in Benin (Benin) [\$447,072.00]
- 8) PD 925/22 Rev.2 (F) Support to the Local Communities of the Mono Plain for the Promotion and Sustainable Management of Community Forests in Togo (Togo) [\$591,808.00]
- 9) *PD 929/22 Rev.1 (F) Developing Silvicultural Management Models for Forest Restoration Based on the Use of Seed Trees for the Establishment of Natural and Artificial Regeneration in the Province of Tahuamanu, Peru (Peru) [\$1,061,040.00]

10.2 Pre-projects

The Committee took note of the status of approved pre-projects, as contained in Document CRF(LVII)/3.

(A) Pre-projects under implementation

None.

(B) Pre-projects awaiting implementation agreement

None.

(C) Pre-projects awaiting financing

The Committee noted that one pre-project was still awaiting funding. This pre-project will become sunset between the 57th and 59th CRF Sessions.

- 1) PPD 203/23 Rev.1 (F) Support for the Promotion and Sustainable Management of Community Forests in the Oti Plain, Togo (Togo) [\$117,712.00]

10.3 Biennial Work Programme-based Activities

The Chairperson informed the Committee that six activities are listed under Biennial Work Programme-based Activities and the progress of these activities are reported in Document CRF(LVII)/3. The Committee was updated on the following activities:

PP-A/54-331A Promoting Quality Timber Production in Smallholders and Community-based Teak and Other Valuable Species Plantations in the Tropics

The Secretariat informed the Committee that this project originated from the concept note (CN-23026) and received financing of US\$1,413,449 from the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in August 2023. The project aims to significantly improve the production of high-quality timber from teak and other valuable species plantations established by smallholders and communities in the Asia-Pacific and West Africa. The implementation of project activities began in early November 2023.

The Regional Project Leader (Prof. Yongyut, Kasertsat University, Thailand) made a presentation on the structure and implementation of the project. The project collaborating partners include Cambodia Forestry Administration, Thailand Royal Forestry Department and Kasetsart University, Vietnamese Academy of Forest Sciences, Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education in Dehradun, Indonesia Ministry of Environment and Forestry as well as University of Lomé, Togo in West Africa. Key activities include promoting financial schemes that invest in high-quality teak production with long rotations and provide access to voluntary carbon markets. Leveraging carbon credit markets would provide additional incentives and support the global effort on climate change mitigation.

The Committee recommended the efficient and successful implementation of the project and facilitation of regional and international cooperation for sustainable smallholder plantations.

PP-A/59-351 Community-Based Restoration of Cyclone-Affected Vulnerable Mangrove Forests through the Empowerment of Coastal Communities and Women in the Rewa Delta, Fiji

The Secretariat reported to the Committee that this project was developed in early 2023 with the support of the Japan Emergency Budget Programme. It builds on the successful completion of PD 696/13 Rev.2 (F) "Community Based Restoration and Sustainable Management of Vulnerable Forests of the Rewa Delta, Fiji", which significantly contributed to the restoration of degraded mangrove ecosystems in the Rewa Delta. The project agreement was signed in June 2023 by ITTO and the Ministry of Fisheries and Forestry in Fiji. The Secretariat awaits a proposal for the selection of a project leader, along with a detailed workplan for the speedy commencement of the project.

The Delegation of Fiji informed the Committee that the Executing Agency has faced the problem of securing a capable project leader. Despite two unsuccessful attempts in filing the vacancy for this position, efforts are accelerating to quickly appoint a project leader. Project activities will commence promptly, utilizing the same project sites and stakeholders as PD 696/13 Rev.2 (F).

The Committee urged the Executing Agency to expedite the appointment of a project leader along with the submission of a detailed Work Plan required for the disbursement of the first installment for the commencement of the project.

PP-A/59-352

Community Empowerment in Forest Management and Forest Landscape Restoration in Upper Baram, Sarawak, Malaysia

The Secretariat informed the Committee that, together with PD 902/19 Rev.3 (F), this project has been implemented by the Forest Department Sarawak since September this year. The Executing Agency has initiated collaboration with partners to promote community empowerment in forest management and forest landscape restoration within the Upper Baram Forest Area, Sarawak, Malaysia.

The Delegation of Malaysia informed the Committee that the progress of the project is on track with collective efforts. Current project activities mainly focus on improving the livelihoods of local communities to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters in the project areas. Additionally, efforts are underway to prepare a detailed concept note to organize an Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on FLR in summer 2024 in Sarawak.

The Committee encouraged the Executing Agency to effectively carry out all project activities with active engagement of the target local communities for the success of the project.

Item 11 - Biennial Work Programme of the Committee for 2024-2025

The Committee noted that the strategic policy activities of the Committee for 2024-2025 are presented in the draft ITTO Biennial Work Programme (BWP) for 2024-2025 and will be reviewed by the Chairperson's Open-ended Drafting Group.

Regarding Activity 5 under Group 1 (Field-oriented Activities with engagement of work in Member countries) of the draft BWP for 2024-2025, the Secretariat made a presentation on the purpose of seeking additional funds, which will be used for holding two regional workshops to disseminate the 2016 ITTO Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) revised for adaption to African context. The e-version in English which is posted on the ITTO website as Policy Series 26 titled "*ITTO criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of African tropical forests*". He recalled that the first set of ITTO C&I for SFM was approved by its Council in 1991 and presented at the Rio de Janeiro Summit in 1992. It was followed by other international C&I Processes (Pan-European Process for temperate forests, Montreal Process for boreal forests, etc.).

The Committee recommended the continued leadership of ITTO in promoting C&I for SFM in partnership with other international C&I processes.

Item 12 - Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for 2024

Mr. Jorge Mario Rodríguez (Costa Rica) was elected as the Chairperson of the CRF for 2024. The Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for 2024 will be announced by the Consumer Caucus at a later date.

Item 13 - Dates and Venues of the Fifty-eighth and Fifty-ninth Sessions of the Committee

The Fifty-eighth Session of the Committee will be held in conjunction with the Sixtieth Session of the International Tropical Timber Council in 2024.

The Fifty-ninth Session of the Committee will be held in conjunction with the Sixty-first Session of the International Tropical Timber Council in 2025.

Item 14 - Other Business

The Committee expressed its gratitude to Dr. Hwan-ok Ma of the Secretariat for his dedicated 27 years of service for the Forest Management Division in promoting the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of tropical forests. Dr. Ma said it has been his honor to serve and collaborate with so many passionate people around the world. He thanked his colleagues in the Secretariat for their support and wished the Committee continued success in its endeavors.

Item 15 - Recommendations to the International Tropical Timber Council

(A) The Committee recommended that funding be made immediately available for the following projects approved under the Project Cycle 2023:

Project(s)

PD 925/22 Rev.2 (F) Support to the Local Communities of the Mono Plain for the Promotion and Sustainable Management of Community Forests in Togo
[ITTO Budget: US\$ 591,808]

Pre-projects

PPD 203/23 Rev.1 (F) Support for the Promotion and Sustainable Management of Community Forests in the Oti Plain, Togo
[ITTO Budget: US\$ 117,712]

(B) The Committee endorsed the 2024-2025 Programme Document for the ITTO-CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Biodiversity Forests [Document CRF(LVII)/4] to enhance biodiversity conservation in tropical forests with the direct participation of local stakeholders.

Item 16 - Report of the Session

The Committee accepted this Report for submission to the Council.

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