

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY DR. M. NURUDEEN IDDRISU, DIRECTOR – TRADE AND INDUSTRY, ITTO. “REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON NON-DETRIMENT FINDINGS (NDF) FOR LATIN AMERICA, RADISSON HOTEL, SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA, APRIL 1-3, 2025”.**

The Honorable Vice-Minister of Environment and Energy, **Sr. Mario Rodriguez Zuñiga**,

Distinguished Head of Government Institutions and Academia present,

CITES Management Authorities, Scientific Authorities, and our esteemed facilitators.

Distinguished workshop participants from across our member countries,

On behalf of the ITTO Executive Director, **Ms Sheam Satkuru**, I welcome you all to San Jose, Costa Rica to our regional workshop for non-detriment findings for Latin America where we have ten (10) ITTO member countries participating. Your presence here is a strong demonstration to your shared commitment to ensuring sustainable forest management and sustainable trade, which is legal and traceable for our timber species, especially those that are listed under Appendix II of CITES regulations.

We wish to express our thanks to the **Unites States** government for their generous support which has made it possible for us to hold this workshop and meet in beautiful San Jose where in the next 3 days we will have the opportunity to learn and share our experiences about CITES listed timber species and learn the tools on how to determine non-detriment findings for species listed in CITES Appendix II, through the NDF 9-step guidance.

As you all know, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) regulates the international trade in plants and animals' species, and that trade of any of these species is legal and does not threaten species' survival in the wild. CITES works to facilitate environmentally and biologically sustainable trade, whenever possible. **And it is safe** to say that without regulation, international trade in tropical timber species can pose serious risks to species by depleting wild populations, leading to their extinction. **This is a scenario** that we don't want to see happen and it is for this reason that ITTO over the years has worked assiduously in partnership with global CITES players such as CITES Secretariat, donors such as USA, EU, Germany just to mention a few to implement projects and undertake training workshop in our member countries.

**Honorable Vice-Minister**, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, as you may be aware, a well-structured, regulated market of all timber species not just those listed in CITES Appendices can be a catalyst for growth and development in the timber industry in ITTO member countries and beyond. This will require collaboration among all stakeholders and actors along the timber supply chain so we can continue to trade sustainably and legally and leave our forests sustainably managed for the next generation.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is an exciting period for the ITTO and its members to gather here today for the regional workshop. We are happy to inform members that we have assembled well renowned NDF Resource Persons with the requisite knowledge and experience to train us and guide us on how to prepare an NDF for the various species listed in Appendix II with a case study of Cumarú / Sihuahuaco as it is known here in Central America. So be prepared to learn and share your experiences with other colleagues through the facilitation of our distinguished consultants from Germany Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and TRAFFIC, respectively.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Cámara Nacional Forestal, Madera e Industria (CFMI) for their hard work and collaborative efforts towards this event, without them this gathering would not be possible.

Last but not the least we would like to thank the city of San José for being our host and the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) for accepting our request to host this event. Special mention goes to the Vice-Minister **Sr. Jorge Mario Rodríguez Zuñiga** for his advice, wonderful collaboration, and contribution not just to the people of Costa Rica, but also to ITTO over the years.

I wish us all a productive meeting and enriching three days ahead.

Thank you.

**Saludos cordiales**