



**INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL
TIMBER COUNCIL**

JOINT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEES

Distr.
GENERAL

ITTC-JC(LVIII)/2
9 December 2024

ENGLISH ONLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH SESSION
2-6 December 2024
Yokohama, Japan

REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER COUNCIL

**FIFTY-EIGHT SESSION OF THE
JOINT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEES**

Report on JOINT SESSION OF THE COMMITTEES – ITTC 60Th

Item 1 - Report of the Expert Panel for Technical Appraisal of Project Proposals

The Joint Session of All Committees considered the report of the Fifty-ninth Virtual Expert Panel for Technical Appraisal of Project Proposals. On the absence of the panel members, Mr. Gerhard Bruehlmann from the Secretariat presented the report, as contained in document ITTC/EP-59 (presentation available at <https://www.itto.int/ittc-60/presentations/>).

The Fifty-ninth Panel appraised five (5) proposals. The Panel noted that:

- Four (4) Project Proposals (80 percent of the total) were commended to the Committee for final appraisal with minor modifications required (category 1); and
- One (1) Project Proposal (20 percent of the total) will be sent back to proponent for essential revision, rated as category 2.

Mr. Bruehlmann noted the downward trend of the number of proposals submitted by ITTO members, from 30 proposals submitted in 2019 covering all three technical divisions of the ITTO Secretariat to 5 proposals under one technical division (Division of Reforestation and Forest Management). Due to the low number of proposals, the expert panel was convened virtually instead of in-person.

The US Delegation thanked the presenter for summarizing the work of the 59th Expert Panel for technical appraisal of proposals and encouraged the Expert Panel to meet virtually and on ad-hoc basis, as needed.

The Brazilian Delegation thanked the 59th Expert Panel and briefly presented to the Committee the objectives and expected outputs of the project proposal PD 938/24 Rev.1 (F), which has been approved as Category 1 by the 59th Expert Panel, emphasizing its strong community component.

The Indonesian Delegation also thanked the 59th Expert Panel and briefly presented to the Committee the objectives and expected outputs of the project proposal PD 940/24 Rev.1 (F), noting the project's focus on community involvement and customary rights as a high priority for implementing forest management in the project target area.

Item 1.a - New Projects and Pre-projects

[Document ITTC/EP-59]

The Committee noted the following projects and pre-projects were approved under the time-bound electronic no objection procedures and circulated to member countries pursuant to Decision 6(XLIII), as contained in Annex to Document ITTC/EP-59, following the recommendations of the Expert Panel at its 59th Meeting as follows:

Fifty-ninth Expert Panel

Category 1:

PD/PPD NUMBER	TITLE	SUBMITTING COUNTRY
PD 936/24 Rev.1 (F)	Protection and Restoration of Forest Lands for Water Catchment, Regulation and Recharge in the Upper Salinas River Watershed, Guatemala, as a Climate Change Adaptation Measure to Ensure Water Supply for the Guatemalan Population	Guatemala
PD 938/24 Rev.1 (F)	Sustainable Management of Production Forests Driven by Traditional Communities in the Brazilian Amazon	Brazil
PD 940/24 Rev.1 (F)	Strengthening Effective Forest Area Designation and Customary Rights in East Nusa Tenggara Province as a Precondition of Achieving Sustainable Forest Management	Indonesia
PD 941/24 Rev.1 (F)	Capacity Building for Private and Community Tree Farmers in Relation with the Sustainable Management of Forest Plantations in Southern Benin	Benin

The Committee recommended that the Category 1 proposals be recommended to the Council for funding by ITTO donors.

Item 2 - Ex-post Evaluation Reports

(A) CRF Ex-post Evaluation Reports [Document CRF(LVIII)/4]

The Joint Session of Committees took note of the report of the assessment of the forest fire thematic group ex-post evaluation on two following completed projects: PP-A/56-340-1 implemented in Indonesia and PPA/56-340-2 implemented in Peru. The ex-post evaluation was carried out in Indonesia by Professor Dr. Bambang Hero Saharjo and in Peru by Professor Dr. María Isabel Manta Nolasco, under the supervision of the international consultant Professor Dr. Johann Georg Goldammer.

The primary purpose was to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the implementation of both completed forest fire projects to determine the successful and unsuccessful outcomes, the reasons of successes and failures, while highlighting the contribution of both projects towards the achievement of sustainable forest management good practices in Indonesia and Peru.

The consultant Dr. Lucy Amissah made a presentation on the outcomes of the assessment of both ex-post evaluations at the Joint Session of the Committees. She highlighted that both completed projects contributed to the following major aspects: promotion of approaches for land preparation without using fire as a tool, the utilization of innovative technology for fire suppression and detection including the smart patrol information system on forest fire, and satellite monitoring for early warnings, and community involvement in the implementation of fire management strategies.

Following the presentation, the US Delegation thanked the presenter for sharing the results of the analysis and lessons learned which could be considered for revising and updating the ITTO guidelines on fire management in tropical forests and for future ITTO project proposals related to wildfire management. The USA proposed to include in the revised ITTO guidelines some references to professional qualification required for fire management personnel, the importance of considering local traditions, and the creation of standardized training techniques. The USA noted the inclusion in the ex-post evaluation report of national and regional Centers of excellence in forest fire management. Based on their experience with interagency fire coordination, the USA suggested that these specific regional centers should have clearly defined mandates and closely coordinate with emergency operations centers and have direct linkages to other forest fire national and local policy and protocols and efforts. Lastly, the USA encouraged ITTO to take into account developments of the Global Fire Management Hub in ITTO's future fire work.

Supporting the US comments, the Canadian Delegation also congratulated the presenter and emphasized the importance of the work that the ITTO is doing on guidelines in relation to the fire management in tropical forests. Canada encouraged ITTO to be in connection and seek synergies with the Global Fire Management Hub (GFMH) and the International Forest Model Network. They emphasized the importance of integrated fire management as well as early warning systems.

The Secretariat thanked Canada and the United States for their comments and informed the Committee that ITTO is an active member of the Global Wildland Advisory Group of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, as well as of the International Liaison Committee for the Wildfire Committee and Global Fire Management Hub. ITTO was also directed recently by the United Nations Forum on Forests to develop a collaborative initiative on fire on a broader scale than just tropical forests. Therefore, ITTO will be working very closely with FAO and other CPF members to develop that joint initiative in the coming year.

The Secretariat also informed the Committee that approaches piloted under the ITTO Indonesia project were submitted to the International Climate Competition of Green Eurasia 2024. It received first place in the category of sustainable land use, forestry and water management for the work that Indonesia is doing on zero burning practices and alternative developments for land preparation without fire. These innovations were presented at a side event at the UNFCCC COP29 held in Baku, Azerbaijan in November 2024.

Item 3 - CSAG Panel Discussion

The theme of the 2024 ITTO Civil Society Advisory (CSAG) Panel Discussion was: "Restoration Strategy: Challenges and Opportunities from Africa, Asia and Latin America". The discussion was chaired by Mr. Chen Hin Keong (CSAG Chairperson).

The speakers, and the titles of their presentations, were as follows:

Chen Hin Keong (TRAFFIC) and Amy Woolloff (TRAFFIC)	<i>Sustainable use strategies and experiences in restoration – some case studies</i>
Delphine Ahoussi (Association MALEBI),	<i>Support for rural women's projects for the Rehabilitation of Degraded Forest Landscapes: What is a realistic deadline for carbon finance?</i>
Danielle Ramiaranmanana (REFACOF Madagascar)	<i>Restoration strategies and experiences: challenges and lessons from Africa (Case of Cameroon)</i>
Lydia Atutonu (REFACOF Togo)	<i>ITTO activity: PP-A/56-341 Support for women's groups for the restoration of forest landscapes in the prefectures of Blitta and Lacs in Togo – Phase III</i>
Ximena Buitron Cisneros (Fairwild Foundation)	<i>Restoration strategies and experiences in South America: Productive and Conservation Landscapes</i>
Christine Wulandari (CSAG Indonesia)	<i>Gender roles in forest restoration for ecology and economic functions sustainability, an example from Indonesia</i>

The presentations were followed by a question-and-answer session with members of the Council. Following the event, Mr. Chen Hin Keong (CSAG Coordinator) presented the CSAG Statement (Appendix). Presentations made during the 2024 CSAG Side Event and the CSAG Statement are available at <http://www.itto.int/ittc-60/presentation>.

Summary of Presentations

Chen Hin Keong and Amy Woolloff, TRAFFIC

Sustainable use strategies and experiences in restoration – some case studies

Mr. Keong started his presentation with a question on why sustainable use is important in restoration. The nature restoration is about rethinking on how to live sustainably and in harmony with nature. Ensuring that restored habitats remain so in the long term that needs a rational approach to the dependence of humans on natural resources. While there will always need to be some areas that need a very high level of protection. In general, we cannot pursue a conservation model that separates humans from the natural world – we are part of the ecosystem too.

There is a huge reliance around the world on natural resources – the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services IPBES report on Sustainable Use of Wild Species found that one in five people rely on wild plants and similar ingredients for their food and income.

It's a huge global trade – the legal trade in CITES listed species alone has been estimated as having a value of 220 billion dollars, and that's not including trade that's currently illegal or not reported. Many of these products include timber and non-timber forest products, that can be sourced from landscapes undergoing restoration, or that have been restored. Just a small subset of non-timber forest products has been reported to have a value of close to 2million USD in 2022.

Engaging local communities living in and around landscapes undergoing restoration is very important.

Continued access, and integrating new opportunities for sustainable use and trade, can protect and enhance livelihoods and enable new connections to the landscape. TRAFFIC is currently partnering with Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), the Society for Ecosystem Restoration (SER) and others to develop the Global Biodiversity Standard, a new standard and certification system that aims to recognize and promote the protection, restoration, and enhancement of biodiversity within a range of different landscapes and land management interventions (tree planting, habitat restoration and agroforestry). TRAFFIC's role includes contributing to the certification methodology development (focusing on how to assess sustainable

use of the restored landscapes, and other topics such as community and stakeholder engagement) and developing guidance material for assessors and practitioners on sustainable use topics.

Delphine Ahoussi (Association Malebi)

Support for rural women's projects for the Rehabilitation of Degraded Forest Landscapes: What is a realistic deadline for carbon finance?

Ms. Ahoussi informed about REFACOF as an African Women's Network for Community Forest Management. Created in May 2009 during an international ITTO conference by 20 women from 20 different countries and currently has focal points in 25 countries. She also said that MALEBI is an Organization of women producers and traders of eco-responsible charcoal that implemented ITTO project in 2009. The Malebi has 60 members of women associations in Cote d'Ivoire and has trained over over 50,000 people on how to produce charcoal. Malebi has just been awarded by the Government an Award of Excellent for their work during the last 15 years.

Malebi is targeting to work on carbon related issues and currently submitting an application to get access to manage 15,000 hectares of forest for renewable energy.

Danielle Ramiaranmanana (REFACOF Madagascar)

Restoration strategies and experiences: challenges and lessons from Africa (Case of Cameroon)

Ms. Ramiaranmanana presented the restoration strategies and experiences in challenges and lessons from Africa based on the case of Cameroon. She introduced some initiatives such as "Building Approaches to fund local Solutions with climate Evidence – BASE", "Women for Biodiversity – W4B" and "Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity – GPH".

Ms. Ramiaranmanana emphasized that these very promising community restoration initiatives are being carried out in several REFACOF member countries and beyond and they clearly illustrate the strong involvement of women and young people in the restoration of degraded landscapes in Africa. The strategies developed and the experiences acquired demonstrate the need to scale up these successful initiatives. REFACOF, in thanking the partners who have enabled the implementation of these initiatives, including the contribution to improving the vegetation cover of forest ecosystems, calls on ITTO to scale up these initiatives. This is how the impact on sustainable forest management, the return of biodiversity and socio-economic development will be measured.

Lydia Atutonu (REFACOF Togo)

ITTO activity: PP-A/56-341

Support for women's groups for the restoration of forest landscapes in the prefectures of Blitta and Lacs in Togo – Phase III

Ms. Atutonu introduced the implementation of ITTO Activity PP-A/56-341 "Support to women's groups for the restoration of forest landscapes in the prefectures of Blitta and Lacs in Togo – Phase III". She said the objective of this activity is to consolidate the achievements of the two previous phases implemented in Togo through the establishment of community forests contributing to restoring degraded forest landscapes and improving the livelihoods of communities, including women's groups.

Ms. Atutonu elaborated on the impact of the activity implementation. First, women have acquired skills in plant production and produce them for their own needs and generate monetary income. Second, food production enabled beneficiary households to meet their food needs and generate income. Third, beneficiary women have improved their livelihoods and diversified their sources of income, and have improved their visibility at the regional, prefectural and even national levels as a model for the contribution of women in plant production, restoration of degraded forest landscapes and diversification of sources of income.

She further thanked Saka Gakai of Japan for funding this activity and ITTO for the technical support and looked forward to further support to African women in their efforts to improve their means of subsistence and to restore forest ecosystems.

Ximena Buitron Cisneros, Fairwild Foundation

Restoration strategies and experiences in South America: Productive and Conservation Landscapes

Ms. Cisneros presented the restoration strategies and experiences in Latin America. She introduced how the local urban community is involved in restoration initiatives with native species, related challenges and lessons learned from Brazil and Ecuador in implementing restoration strategies initiatives, and benefits of restoration in the various dimensions, environmental, social, economic, health and nutrition, as well as of improving income and livelihoods. She has been especially satisfied that women have actively participated in the

implementation of this project, which has led to great empowerment for them in these productive landscapes.

Ms. Cisneros also shared with information and experiences of two specific projects implemented in Bolivia and Brazil, which were related to restoration after wildfires, and how restoration supported social biodiversity.

Christine Wulandari, CSAG Indonesia

Gender roles in forest restoration for ecology and economic functions sustainability, an example from Indonesia

The main difference between restoration and rehabilitation is that restoration aims to return the ecosystem to its original state, while rehabilitation focuses on making the ecosystem functional again.

It can involve: i) Planting, pruning, weeding, protecting from fire or grazing, controlled burns, removing or controlling species, etc.; and ii) It can be done by man, woman, old person/ community and children.

Ms. Wulandari informed that gender is a set of roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that are considered appropriate for men and women (WHO). Scientific findings have shown that gender-based task differentiation affects forest management. Various studies suggest that women's participation is possible when there are less exclusive institutions, higher levels of family education and lower economic inequality between genders. Increasing women's participation in decision-making committees in various community forest institutions has shown improvements in forest governance and resource sustainability.

She said women's income from managing forests will decline as climate change affects the availability of natural resources. Conversely, if women are more active in managing forests, natural resource damage tends to be small so that management is more sustainable which encourages climate resilience in forest management. Women are faster in climate adaptation. Gender roles in Indonesia can vary depending on the activity. Domestic activities: Women tend to play a larger role in domestic and reproductive work. Sociopolitical activities: Women tend to participate less than men in sociopolitical activities, such as attending community meetings. Peatland activities: Men tend to be more knowledgeable about peatlands and dominate peatland agricultural activities. Dr. Christine further shared a few cases of women's role in Indonesia.

Discussion and interventions

1. Mr. Chen shared his thoughts that when we are talking about gender, rural community, local communities and restoration and or reforestation, we are not talking about large scales in hectares. We are talking about local communities and how women, men, children live and work closely together with natural resources, with forest resources.
2. In Costa Rica the roles of women have been identified to contribute to achieve the goals of restoration. In rural communities, the work of women is oftentimes not visible and the land ownership of the productive forest is only 15% and therefore having less access to financing schemes. There is a need to level the playing field as the knowledge that women have on natural resources is unequal to men. The Government of Peru provides prizes for the women's participation for the sake of healthy planet. At the International Day of Rural Women, October 2024, the prizes were given to 12 women who are exemplary in advancing women empowerment and leadership in environmental management.
3. Delegate from the Republic of Korea highlighted the women initiatives in Africa to replace the use of conventional firewood into more clean and efficient biomass energy.
4. For Cote d'Ivoire, the rehabilitation project really has an impact, a positive impact on forests. Malebi produced charcoal for cooking in rural areas by cutting down trees in the forest. With the project financed by ITTO, we've had a project for a hundred hectares of acacia. Five years after planting, we can have regeneration of these species. We don't touch trees in the forest anymore, including in mangrove areas.
5. Issues on gender, young generation and social inclusion mainstreaming in forest management, both in the upstream and downstream sectors need to be promoted. In the case of Indonesia, the role of NTFP is also very crucial not only for the community, but also for the government revenues.
6. It is interested to know whether there is any written policy specifically involving women participation in forest landscape restoration. And this one is in respect of Indonesia specifically and how you ensure the success of the participation when it involves the local communities. In Indonesia there is a requirement to have 30% of women involvement in the activities related to SFM.
7. ITTO's Forest Landscape Restoration guidelines should be promoted to the members to support efforts to make the landscape more resilient for Sustainable Forest Management and sustainable land management practices. In many forest-dependent communities, women are often responsible for managing scarce resources such as water, food and fuel, positioning them as key stakeholders in land and forest restoration initiatives. They also have indigenous knowledge of local farming methods, plants and ecosystems, and sustainable land management and restoration practices.

8. Community forestry and the role of women should be strongly encouraged and supported. Global standards such as the Global Biodiversity Standard, FAIRWILD standard and tools and systems can form a good basis to support forest restoration, coupled with good, in-depth understanding of the issues, challenges and learning and practices shared by CSAG members through their projects that brings local, regional and national understanding, analysis and solutions-based approaches.
9. Given the escalating global climate crisis and the central role of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change, CSAG looks forward to working closely with ITTO to achieve its overarching objectives, in particular the various efforts to promote the sustainable management of tropical timber-producing forests and make visible the role of women in those efforts.

CSAG statement

Mr. Chen Hin Keong (CSAG Co-coordinator) read out a prepared statement to participants attending the CSAG Side Event.

Globally, forest loss and degradation continue to degrade the quality of ecosystems worldwide. We believe that solving the problem requires more than just planting trees, and ITTO and its partners have increasingly recognised that a landscape approach is essential. However, while Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), as presented by ITTO and its partners, is an effort to increase the resilience of landscapes and the communities they support, it should not only be about restoring pristine forests but also about making landscapes more resilient for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Sustainable Land Management practices that provide a pathway to resilience, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation, including supporting forest-dependent communities, especially women, in their efforts to increase and sustain the benefits they derive from land and forest management.

In many forest-dependent communities, women are often responsible for managing scarce resources such as water, food and fuel, positioning them as key stakeholders in land and forest restoration initiatives. They also have indigenous knowledge of local farming methods, plants and ecosystems, and sustainable land management and restoration practices. We have no doubt, therefore, that, if empowered, women's agricultural experience can inform effective strategies for rehabilitating and restoring degraded land by identifying Indigenous timber and non-timber forest species and selecting crops that will improve soil health and build resilience and sustainability for future generations within the community. Hence, members need to ensure that forest restoration should not only focus on reforestation but to consider the wide range of focus, perspectives and needs of people, biodiversity and also economic development.

CSAG is very pleased that ITTO agreed to the CSAG panel discussion on 'Restoration strategies and experiences: Challenges and lessons from Africa, Asia and South America', not only to further highlight the importance of community-led restoration but also to focus on financial inclusion, women's empowerment and policies that enable an environment where livelihoods and landscape restoration are all taken care of.

CSAG/TRAFFIC, through our collaboration with partners, has been working on various tools and systems that contribute towards integrating sustainable use and trade into landscape restoration. TRAFFIC is currently partnering with Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) and others to develop the Global Biodiversity Standard, a new standard and certification system that aims to recognise and promote the protection, restoration, and enhancement of biodiversity within a range of different landscapes and land management interventions (tree planting, habitat restoration and agroforestry). In partnership with FairWild and the IUCN Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group (SULi), TRAFFIC is developing guidance for restoration practitioners wishing to integrate sustainable use into their landscapes as part of a project funded by the Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Programme, and TRAFFIC developed guidance to support sustainable use of CITES-listed rosewood tree species which includes criteria relevant to restoration.

CSAG notes the considerable knowledge and experience among forest-dependent communities, including women, on how to restore degraded forest landscapes. For example, CSAG members have already implemented highly successful restoration projects in several tropical countries. The African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF), is very active in ecosystem restoration in several regions:

1. In Cameroon, REFACOF works in three (3) mangrove areas: the Douala estuary, the Rio del Rey and the Rio Ntem. REFACOF's interventions have resulted in the restoration of 600 hectares of degraded mangrove and terrestrial forest areas. More than 3,000 local workers were involved in this restoration project, with women making up about 80% of the workforce;
2. In Togo and Benin, ITTO women-led agroforestry projects restored about 100 hectares of degraded

landscapes in the Lakes and Blitta regions of Togo. These initiatives involved over 150 women and introduced agroforestry systems to improve food security and increase incomes through agroforestry and landscape restoration practices;

3. In Côte d'Ivoire, the MALEBI association organized women and young people to reforest more than 500 hectares with food crops (taungya) in three classified forests, as part of the Forest Investment Project (PIF) financed by the World Bank. This initiative involved more than 60 associations and 2000 people, 90% of whom were women and 10% young people; and

With the revision of the FairWild Standard to version 3.0, FairWild now covers a wider range of land-use/collection scenarios, including restoration and rewilding projects. The FairWild standard and certification system is therefore a valuable framework for certifying the sustainable use of restored landscapes.

At the same time, forest restoration programs in Indonesia show the role of gender in supporting target achievement. The research collaboration on the impact of the restoration program in Lampung Province, conducted by the Forum Komunikasi Kehutanan Masyarakat (FKKM) and the University of Lampung (Unila), shows that there is an increase in gender roles in farmer institutions and forest management, and can show that additional income from this program can reach 10-15%. Gender also plays a role in increasing land cover by about 5% per year.

We encourage ITTO to rampant up support of more gender-focused projects.

Given the escalating global climate crisis and the central role of forests in mitigating and adapting to climate change, CSAG looks forward to working closely with ITTO to achieve its overarching objectives, in particular the various efforts to promote the sustainable management of tropical timber-producing forests and make visible the role of women in those efforts.

Recommendations

Moving forward, we therefore recommend that:

1. ITTO should consider actively engaging our member organizations and communities in the various conversations and opportunities that contribute to sustainable development and climate goals, for example, in working with the Global Green Fund (GCF)¹ on forest landscape restoration and resilient livelihoods to help scale up the area and governance of forest landscape restoration and increase the provision of goods and services from planted and restored forests in ITTO member countries;
2. To recognize and promote the role of women in both forestry and land restoration, and to improve outcomes for women and the environment, there is a need for gender-sensitive policies and laws that are informed by women's experiences;
3. Support is needed from the ITTO, its member countries and investors to address the barriers women face to effective and efficient participation in the forest sector, such as cultural barriers, limited access to resources, land tenure, benefit sharing, rights, and decision-making power; and
4. Given the momentum already created by the various ITTO projects, we urge the ED, Council and Secretariat to further accelerate support for community-led implementation of the ITTO's published guidelines on Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR), in particular two (2) of the principles and guiding elements (i.e. Principles 2 & 5) formulated by the ITTO to support stakeholders involved in FLR implementation and outcomes. This recommendation is further supported by lessons² already learned by ITTO from case studies in restoration that: a.) To ensure the effective participation of local stakeholders and guarantee fair benefits, communities need to have strong rights and secured tenure based on customary practices; b.) Stakeholder engagement, especially among local communities, plays a big role in the success of FLR; and c.) Strong awareness among local people and communities of the direct and indirect economic and social benefits of FLR is essential for obtaining their commitment and support.

We encourage the Council to also take into account our previous statements.

¹ <https://www.greenclimate.fund/ae/itto>

² ITTO 2020. Guidelines for forest landscape restoration in the tropics. ITTO Policy Development Series No. 24. International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Yokohama, Japan, p.135

We look forward to working with ITTO on all these issues.

Thank you.

Chairs

Chen Hin Keong, TRAFFIC, Chair and official contact person for CSAG
hk.chen@traffic.org

South America Focal Point
Ximena Buitrón, FairWild Foundation, Ecuador
ximebuitronci@gmail.com

Asia Pacific Focal Points
Christine Wulandari, FKMM, Indonesia
chs.wulandari@gmail.com

Africa Focal Points
Cecile Ndjebet, Cameroon Ecology, Cameroon
cecilendjebet28@gmail.com

Francis Colee, Green Advocates, Liberia
francis.colee@elaw.org

Other CSAG Observer Members:

Ms Gwogon Gwet Jacqueline
REFACOF Cameroon
Email: jackiegwet1965@gmail.com

Chimene Musanga Timani,
REFACOF DRC, Femme Autochtone
Email: musangatimani@yahoo.fr

Shizuka Yasui
Forest Stewardship Council, Asia Pacific Regional Office
Email: s.yasui@fsc.org

Delphine Ahoussi
Presidente de l'Association MALEBI
Email: Ahoussi_delphine@yahoo.fr

Fernanda Rodrigues
Forest Women Network, Brazil / Amazon
Forest Forum, Brazilian Forests Dialogue
Email: fe.rodrigues.1412@gmail.com

Rose Pelagie Masso
REFACOF Regional Planning and Cooperation Officer
Email: rosymass1@yahoo.fr

Danièle Ramiamanana
REFACOF Madagascar
ramiamanana.daniele@gmail.com

Theme for 2025 CSAG Side Event

The CSAG decided to defer its decision on the theme for the 2025 CSAG Side Event. A theme will be conveyed to the ITTO Secretariat in advance of the next ITTC.

Item 4 - Annual Market Discussion 2024

The theme of the 2024 Annual Market Discussion organized by the ITTO Trade Advisory Group (TAG) was: "Production and Trade - Rising Costs and Weakening Demand". The Market Discussion was chaired by Mr. Barney Chan (TAG Coordinator).

The speakers, and the titles of their presentations, were as follows:

Dr. Ivan Tomaselli

Past and Future of Tropical Timber

Brazilian Mechanically Processed Wood Industry Association (ABIMCI)

Mr. Jean Marie Ntoutoume

Production et Commerce du Bois – Cas du Gabon

Union des Forestiers et Industriels du Bois du Gabon

Mr. Alfonso Hernández Ángel

Mexico Tropical Timber Overview

National Association of Importers and Exporters of Forest Products, Mexico

Mr. Ngo Sy Hoai

*Vietnam Forestry and Wood Industry amid Global
Economic and Trade Uncertainties*

Vietnam Timber & Forest Product Association

Mr. Braden Jenkin
Sylva Systems Pty Ltd (Australia)

*Using natural forest and plantation grown trees;
different but complementary*

Dr. Luo Xinjian

*Global Green Supply Chain & GLSTF –
An Introduction*

Global Green Supply Chains Initiative (GGSC)

The presentations were followed by a question-and-answer session with members of the Council. Following the event, Mr. Barney Chan (TAG Coordinator) presented the TAG Statement (Appendix B). Presentations made during the 2024 ITTO Annual Market Discussion and the TAG Statement are available at <http://www.itto.int/ittc-60/presentations>.

Summary of Presentations

Dr. Ivan Tomaselli, Brazilian Mechanically Processed Wood Industry Association (ABIMCI)

Past and Future of Tropical Timber

In the early part of the presentation Ivan Tomaselli crisscrossed the tropical world revealing production and trade trends over the past decade. He observed that tropical timber harvested for export, now and in the past, has always been a fraction of the total forest harvest. Most wood harvested is consumed in-country

He presented data to show there has been a steady decline in raw material exports from the largest producers such as Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia whereas primary product exports from West and Central African countries remains only slightly down. The situation in PNG is different, over the past decade there has been an upward trend in raw material exports. In some countries where there has been a decline in raw material exports there has been a welcome rise in trade in finished products.

In the second part of the presentation Ivan Tomaselli asks, has ITTO fulfilled its two overarching objectives? which he paraphrases as “to promote sustainable management and legal harvesting of forests that produce tropical timber and to promote expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical wood products”.

He challenges, have we failed? No, saying ITTO has made great progress in fostering sustainable management of tropical forests and has firmly established sustainability as an integral feature in the actions of the tropical timber industry and trade. He also challenges, are we failing? Saying Yes - and identifies the immediate challenges.

Tropical timber is being replaced by other woods and products, market share has been eroded as costs soar undermining competitiveness. High forest management standards, certification, market impediments, social and environmental demands, reporting requirements, logistics and disruptive policies are driving up costs and driving down confidence in investment and modernisation.

Looking at options for the future Ivan Tomaselli believes “consumers (buyers of tropical timber) in our traditional markets are not receiving information about the progress tropical timber producers have made and are continuing to make”

Mr. Jean Marie Ntoutoume, Union des Forestiers et Industriels du Bois du Gabon

Production et Commerce du Bois – Cas du Gabon

Before the discovery of petroleum in the mid-20th century, forestry was the leading foreign exchange earner in the country. Today, even with the emergence of the oil industry, forestry remains a major foreign exchange earner and accounts for around 17,000 direct and indirect jobs in the private sector. Since 2021, each year log production has far exceeded its level reached 3 years before the ban on the export of logs.

Today, the log production is completely processed locally. Gabon produces mainly sawnwood, veneer and plywood. Now, our industry needs to improve the competitiveness of its products. This requires working mainly on the supply chain and energy to lower production costs and reduce the response time to an order. We also need to develop new products to reach new markets.

Challenges remain in the forestry and wood processing sectors and these include the need for accurate monitoring of production and trade, the impact of logistic issues on trade, how to achieve sustainable

development goals, addressing climate change, protecting biodiversity, seizing opportunities in carbon markets and achieving widespread certification.

Mr. Alfonso Hernández Ángel, National Association of Importers and Exporters of Forest Products, Mexico
Mexico Tropical Timber Overview

Roundwood production in the latest year for which full data is available amounted to 8.8 million cubic metres and on average, during the period 2013-23, the value of timber and non-timber forest products was just over 71 billion pesos (US\$3.9 billion dollars) however, Mr. Hernandez stated production levels remain well below the potential for processing and commercialization. He added, in 2023 the forestry sector generated 266,336 jobs.

Forests are important for the people of Mexico, he said, with almost 12 million people living in or dependent on forest ecosystems. The forests of Mexico extend over some 138 million ha. and there are almost 17 million ha. of communal land used for agriculture in which community members have usufruct rights (Ejidos). The geographical location and climatic conditions support a wide range of ecosystems, home to an extensive biodiversity.

Mr. Hernandez enumerated some of the challenges in the forestry sector, the main being deforestation. He said the permanent loss of forest cover is a serious problem and identified clearing for livestock grazing, agricultural crop production and infrastructure and real estate developments as the main causes.

Additional issues for the traditional timber sector include competition from wood substitutes such as plastic and aluminum and from composite wood products. In his opinion, Mr. Hernandez emphasised the sector has great potential but investment in forest plantations is handicapped by the land ownership system (Ejidos) which does not provide legal certainty and this limits sourcing investment funds. As a result few Ejidos are interested in long-term investment. To conclude Mr. Hernandez provided his suggestions on desirable policy directions that would enable the forestry and wood processing sectors to contribute more to the national economy.

Mr. Ngo Sy Hoai, Vietnam Timber & Forest Product Association
Vietnam Forestry and Wood Industry amid Global Economic and Trade Uncertainties

In his presentation Ngo Sy Hoai provided a wealth of data illustrating the success of both the forestry sector and the wood processing industries which is the result of supportive government interventions on land reform, a good understanding of international market demand, effective R&D and tree seed selection, innovative forest management models and government policy on industrial privatization.

He explained the supply of domestically produced wood is increasing due to the expansion of plantations and the application of science and technology to improve planting materials and forest management. Harvests from commercial plantations increased 4.3 times, from 5.2 million m³ in 2011 to 22.4 million m³ in 2023.

In Vietnam Acacia is king, providing 80% of raw material for domestic processing. Remarkably, 70-80% of the acacia logs are supplied by small households who achieve harvests of 20 - 30 m³/ha/year. This raw material is used for the manufacture of indoor and outdoor furniture (70%), wood-based panels (7%), woodchip (17%) and wood pellet (5%).

It has been realised that the cutting cycle of acacia plantations is too short (4-6 years) as the logs have a high proportion of juvenile wood and the small diameter limits processing options. For long term sustainability of Vietnam's processing industries, there is the need to diversify the country needs to produce more larger diameter and higher quality logs and to upgrade the efficiency of wood industries.

There are many challenges ahead said Hoai and these can be summed up as Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA). He added there are too many varying regulations which push up production costs and disruption of trade due to geopolitical conflicts, tariffs and volatile freight and logistics costs lead to high transaction costs. Also, competition is tough and market demand has weakened. He concludes by asserting industries in Vietnam cannot remain competitive relying on low cost inputs (labour and raw material) hence there is the need to advance with the help of ITTO through leveraging markets and advocating for fair trade and development of the sustainable wood industry.

Mr. Braden Jenkin, Sylva Systems Pty Ltd (Australia)
Using Natural Forest and Plantation Grown Trees; Different but Complementary

This presentation addresses utilising timber sourced from plantation grown trees. It explores wood properties and differences in wood properties between a species in plantations and the same species from the natural forests.

This narrative is set against the background where “global industrial roundwood production is projected to grow by 45% by 2050, to 2.8 billion cubic metres, but tropical production is projected to increase by only 24%, to 533 million cubic metres.

The properties of a species grown in plantations are different from those of the same species harvested in the natural forest and examples of density differences are presented for a range of native PNG hardwoods. Mr. Braden Jenkin points out that “the wood is not bad it is just different”.

This difference, he pointed out, requires a mind-reset so product and market development is based on knowledge of the characteristics of the ‘new’ raw material without reference to what is the norm for the same timber from the natural forest. He added “while plantation wood differs from natural forest trees of a same species it is generally more uniform between trees which is an advantage when processing.

In conclusion, Mr. Braden Jenkin said “plantations offer an opportunity to produce new products in their own right and in combination with natural forest sourced wood.

Dr. Luo Xinjian, Global Green Supply Chains Initiative (GGSC)
Global Green Supply Chain & GLSTF – An Introduction

Dr. Luo provided an overview of the Global Green Supply Chain (GGSC) initiative, an International platform dedicated to advancing timber industry sustainability. She pointed out the mission of the GGSC is to “Work together with multiple parties to create a global ecosystem that translates corporate social and environmental responsibility into a competitive advantage”.

The GGSC was launched in 2018 by 12 leading Chinese enterprises in forest products industry, and became an international initiative in 2019 during the International Forum hosted by ITTO and other organizations on “Together Towards Global Green Supply Chains –A Forest Products Industry Initiative” held in Shanghai with more than 370 participants from 36 countries.

The GGSC initiative is part of the Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains (LSSC) Programme of activities, which was approved at the 53rd session of the ITTC for being included into the Biennial Work Programme (BWP) of ITTO. Since then, GGSC has been acting as a global platform for serving the sustainable development of the forest products industry.

Dr. Luo then introduced the Global Legal & Sustainable Timber Forum 2024 held on 11-12 September 2024 in Macao SAR, China, which was co-hosted by ITTO and IPIM and organized by GGSC. She specified the achievements released of the Forum such as the Action Framework for Promoting Legal & Sustainable Timber Supply Chains, the Full Operation of Global Timber Index (GTI) Platform(10 pilot countries), the Completed Simulation of a Block-chain-based Timber Traceability System, Action on Integration of Green Finance and Green Supply Chains (GF&GSC), Collaboration on Central Africa-China Timber Industrial Clusters and Parks and the successes achieved in business to business matching.

Discussion and interventions

The delegate from Togo raised two questions on balsa wood which was mentioned by the speaker Braden Jenkins, specifically asking what is the rotation cycle, how long does it take until the trees are ready for harvesting and what is the density of this species?

In response Mr. Jenkins informed that balsa is quite a remarkable crop. Originally from Ecuador it has been grown in Papua New Guinea since German colonial times. In the post second war era balsa has been grown on short rotations in PNG. He added that after four to five years the harvest volume would be around 200 to 300 cubic metres per hectares. Six year old trees can reach a height of 35 to 38 metres with a diameter of 50 centimetres.

It's quite a remarkable crop said Mr. Jenkins. However, if balsa is left for longer than five to six years it

develops a red heart, a stain in the wood that is not accepted in the market. Most balsa wood goes into industrial uses especially wind turbine blades. It is also used by the military in a range of vehicles. Balsa requires deep, well drained fertile soils. It also needs uniform rainfall throughout the year, conditions that exist in Papua New Guinea. On the question of density Mr. Jenkins said the oven dry weight of balsa is between 110-150kg per cubic metre.

The delegate from Malaysia asked, can the GTI and GGSC help participating members meet the requirements of the EUDR?

Dr. Luo explained there are ten pilot countries working with the GTI team. A focal point in each country compiles a questionnaire every month based on the response of participating timber companies on the trends in the sector.

She explained the GTI is an information platform and it is planned to arrange meetings between focal point to discuss the challenges members are facing and it is also planned that GTI focal points will visit associations such as the European Timber Trade Federation to better understand and address importer requirements. Also, there will be efforts to expand B2B matching in order for participating companies to better meet the requirements of the EUDR. Finally, EU timber associations will be invited to provide training to the GTI focal point enterprises.

An Observer from the Malaysian Wood Industries Association (MWIA) commented that many speakers mentioned forest plantations in producer member countries but did not address the challenges to trade in wood products from plantation raw material created by so-called 'gate-keepers', specifically mentioning the various cut-off dates set as a reference point in determining whether commodities taken from any part of a given plot of land are linked to deforestation or forest degradation.

The Observer said Malaysia plans to expand plantations and asked what is the future market for plantation wood, are we planting for the sake of planting?

Dr. Tomaselli, in response, said if you know your plantations are sustainable and provided they are not established on land cleared of natural forest but are established on degraded forest areas I do not see a problem.

Mr. Jenkin commented that maybe the challenge is that plantations for wood production are being captured by the EUDR that is intended primarily for something else.

Contributing to the discussion, the speaker from Vietnam said there are three main commodities from Vietnam that fall under the EUDR. The EU imports around 45% of coffee produced in Vietnam, it imports a large amount of pepper and it imports huge quantities of wood products. He said with wood products Vietnam does not see much difficulty. After almost one year of preparing he said Vietnam is confident it can meet EUDR requirements in terms of due diligence and geo-location.

He added, his Association has been guiding different groups of stakeholders and they are quite confident. Many European buyers visit Vietnam and they are confident to sign contract. That the EU has postponed EUDR implementation gives Vietnam enough time to be prepared he said.

The delegate from the USA said the update on the GTI and the GGSC meetings and activities was appreciated and asked for some background on the relationship between ITTO and the GGSC and what are the next steps.

In response, the ITTO Executive Director said the work with the GGSC initiative began in 2018 and was spearheaded by the previous Executive Director. The intention, at that time, (between 2017 and 2018) was to identify the strengths of ITTO and what could be done to enhance the trade portfolio of the Organization. While there were many projects on forest management aspects and biodiversity some members called for a focus on assisting members to establish legal and sustainable supply chains in view of the EU timber regulation.

During that time exports from Africa to the EU began to decline as they were being diverted to China where there was a huge demand for production of manufactured items for export and to meet growing domestic consumption.

The intention for the ITTO's trade portfolio at that time was to try and strengthen the legal and sustainable

supply chain from Africa to China with the hope that this would lead to a recovery of consumption of tropical wood products in the EU and the US.

Through the collaboration with the GGSC initiative under the Chinese Academy forests, with which ITTO has a very close relationship with spanning decades, it was hoped that the Chinese government would become even more interested in supporting the work of the ITTO to try and complete circularity of the supply chains. The first event of significance was the international conference that ITTO organized in Shanghai in 2019. Through the ITTO trade network an international group of stakeholders from Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia convened in Shanghai.

Then came Covid-19 so there was no opportunity for the follow up conference scheduled for either 2021 or 2022 for which funding was requested. During that time the Administration in the Macau SAR made it known they had a policy to diversify its economy. This resulted in ITTO being offered sufficient funding to hold a second international conference to follow through on what was discussed and the commitments that were made in 2019.

Initially Macau SAR requested a focus only on Portuguese speaking ITTO member countries but later agreed, since there were few such ITTO members, it should be open to all ITTO members. This is how the GGSC and the ITTO, together with our partners from the Chinese government, worked out a plan on how we carry the initiative forward.

This is the background to how the first global legal and sustainable timber forum was held in Macau in 2023 as a follow through from ITTOs work in 2019 and this year (2024) the second edition was arranged. The event was well attended with private and public sector delegations from many ITTO member countries.

Turning to the question from the delegate from Malaysia on how the GTI would help members meet the requirements of the EUDR, the Executive Director pointed out that is not the intention of the GTI and that Dr. Luo, in her presentation, correctly explained it is more an information exchange platform in order to update parties who are not yet part of the GLSTF to be able to go to the website and see what information is available on efforts within those countries, what they are doing in terms of putting in place either chain of custody or legality assurance systems, what level of credibility claims they can make and how much stronger they can become with the information through the sub Forums.

As a final point, the Executive Director reported the Administration in Macau SAR has offered to fund and host the 2025 edition and ITTO will continue supporting this initiative and we encourage members of ITTO to participate so that we can try and bring the synergies even closer towards establishing legal and sustainable supply chains and increasing the value chains for forest products in the main consumer markets.

What we had planned in trying to strengthen supply chains from Africa to China has not yet been achieved as we have not had sufficient support from the Central African Forest Initiative. My hope is that this explanation puts everyone at ease that this is a transparent attempt at trying to encourage legal and sustainable supply chains concluded the Executive Director.

A delegate from the EU asked for information on the exact support that ITTO is giving to the GGSC initiative? In response the ITTO Executive Director reported that for the last two years the Macau SAR Administration has provided around US\$1.4 million as a voluntary contribution to support the work that is being conducted under the Global Timber Index and also the blockchain study. ITTO supports the GGSC Secretariat as one of the project implementing agencies for both initiatives and has close contact with the main associations in China as stakeholders in the project we discuss what are the main items that should be brought forth in the forum to be shared with the ITTO membership. The Secretariat also advises on the topics to be discussed in collaboration with GGSC and the organising committee. We also offer suggestions on the speakers who can be invited so that we secure balanced representation and balanced views from producers and consumer member countries this ensures the outcomes of the GLSTF is aligned with ITTO's work plan, mandate, strategic action plan and in line with the Organization rules and regulations.

Trade statement

Ms. Ashley Amidon (TAG) read out a prepared statement to participants attending the Market Discussion.

Chairman
Ladies and Gentlemen

The TAG welcomes the proposal from the European Commission to delay the EUDR application date by

12 months to 30 December 2025 which will allow more preparation time for the timber industry to comply. However, the industry is concerned over the uncertainty of the delay as well as new 11th hour amendments, which are problematic for multiple reasons.

While we acknowledge that ITTO is not able to impact either the delay or the regulation, we would be remiss if we did not highlight this issue, given the seismic impacts the EUDR has and will have on the global forestry policy and trade. We urge the Commission to work with both Consumers and Producers to ensure a smooth implementation of the EUDR.

The tropical timber markets are very unsteady at present and there are a lot of unknowns ahead. The World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report highlighted the struggles and slow recovery of global trade in 2023 marking one of the weakest performances in 50 years outside of global recessions.

Today, wood product manufacturers everywhere are reeling from skyrocketing shipping costs and irregular shipping schedules due to, firstly, the drought in Panama severely curtailing ship passages through the Canal; and secondly, the ongoing conflicts in the Red Sea region. The complaints about the logistics in exporting timber products are loudest from Vietnam, China, Indonesia, Brazil, and Malaysia.

Exporters in many producer countries are not happy that shipping companies are using the continuing fallout from the Covid pandemic and geo-political conflicts as reasons to increase marine freight and other logistics costs. Prior to these recent increases, freight charges from Southeast Asia to the US or EU were around US\$ 2,000 per 40 foot container. In the post-Covid pandemic, freight charges soared between US\$ 18,000 - 20,000, and now, because of the war in Ukraine and the Red Sea chaos, freight charges are varying between US\$ 8,000 - 10,000 to the US and EU markets. Ultimately, these costs will not only depress trade but be passed along to the consumer, at a time when price consciousness is an increasing barrier to the use of wood.

So, in the midst of all these global uncertainties, what can ITTO do to help the timber industry?

The Global Legal and Sustainable Timber Forum (GLSTF) was created in 2023 by ITTO and Macao's Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute, and the inaugural Forum was convened in 2023. In September 2024, the GLSTF launched the Action Framework for Promoting Legal and Sustainable Timber Supply Chains to strengthen international collaboration among stakeholders in timber supply chains, promote the sustainable development of the timber industry, contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, and combat climate change.

In her opening address at GLSTF 2024, ITTO Executive Director Sheam Satkuru asserted that the GLSTF is a collaborative platform of timber industry stakeholders designed to strengthen networking and business exchanges among timber industry stakeholders to facilitate sustainable forest management and the legal and sustainable use and trade of timber and wood products.

During that GLSTF meeting in Macau and subsequent discussions among TAG members globally it was established that the buyers of tropical timber in our traditional markets are not receiving information about the progress tropical timber producers have made and are continuing to make towards SFM. There is a need for a mechanism to communicate, educate, promote, market, and publicise the tremendous progress tropical timber producers have made and are continuing to make since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 on traceability, legality, and sustainability.

It seems a natural fit now for ITTO and GLSTF to work together on addressing the negative perceptions in the market. Firstly, a Working Group of stakeholders could be formed to define what and how to communicate to the buyers of our products. The information of what the producers have been doing towards SFM could be collated to be used in a campaign to address consumer negative perceptions.

TAG proposes that resources and finances could be set aside to employ a dedicated person to handle this important task. There is a desperate need for a person, working without distractions, to undertake the task with help from all ITTO Members.

This 100% focus on rebuilding demand for tropical timber trade is what TAG seeks from ITTC today. Together, we can create a narrative that demonstrates what we all know – that wood is sustainable, that trade benefits forests, and that together, we can protect tropical forests for the future.

Thank you.

Theme for 2025 Annual market discussion

The Trade Advisory Group (TAG) decided to defer its decision on the theme for the 2025 Annual Market Discussion. A theme will be conveyed to the ITTO Secretariat in advance of the next ITTC.

Item 5 - Policy Work under the Committee on Economics, Statistics and Markets

(i) Market Access

The Joint Session of All Committees considered this item. The Secretariat reported on developments relating to market access for tropical timber in 2023-2024, including on four major legislative instruments: the EU Deforestation Regulation, the U.S. Lacey Act Amendments, the Illegal Logging Prohibition Act of Australia and the Clean Wood Act of Japan, which are regulating timber entering into these markets. In addition, the update also covered legislative developments in other important timber markets, namely: the Korean Revised Sustainable Use of Timber Act, Vietnam Timber Legality Assurance System (VNTLAS) and Chinese Forest Law Amendment, as well as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The delegate of Cote d'Ivoire informed the Committees that Cote d'Ivoire has signed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) in February 2024, which has been ratified by its Parliament in September 2024. Cote d'Ivoire is trying to finalize its national system for traceability and legality as the EUDR recognizes timber which is already in accordance with EU-VPA legality requirements.

The delegate of New Zealand updated that its government has been progressing work to strengthen the integrity of the forestry and wood processing supply chain through developing a legal harvest assurance system, which will help reduce illegal logging, facilitate exporters to sell timber overseas, reduce the risk of timber being illegally harvested, and ensure that timber products imported into New Zealand come from legally harvested forests. From 29 November 2024 to 28 February 2025 New Zealand has been seeking feedback on regulatory proposals to help provide clarity on obligations such as information, record keeping and reporting requirements.

The delegate of Malaysia informed the Committees of its efforts in fostering international cooperation. Malaysia has actively participated in two Phases of ITTO activity of establishment and operation of the Global Timber Index platform as part of the ITTO Legal and Sustainable Supply Chain (LSSC) Program, which will strengthen the competitiveness of Malaysian timber industry globally and open new market for tropical wood products in countries that prioritize sustainability and legality standards.

The delegate of Papua New Guinea appreciated an ITTO supported project promoting the forest law enforcement and governance in 2010-2011 which enable PNG in many years to come up with a timber legality standard. Based on project implementation, the standard has been approved by the government and it is being piloted in a number of timber concession areas and auditing was done by international certification bodies.

The delegate of Indonesia said they have made information on deforestation publicly accessible through a dedicated map available online called Simontana, A national forest monitoring system that utilize remote sensing and terrestrial data to provide accurate, transparent, integrated and up-to-date forest information and changes.

The delegate of Panama commented on EUDR that there should be an exchange so that EU can clarify to the producing countries how this new regulation is going to be applied and what will be the processes, so that the producing countries can respond to the new regulation with their own legal frameworks, systems, and processes.

The Secretariat further added that Ghana has set 30 June 2025 as the date to deliver the first consignment of FLEGT licensed timber. It was confirmed during the EU-Ghana Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism held on 7 November 2024. This will be the first in Africa and second in world for FLEGT licensed timber.

(ii) Forest and Timber Certification

The Secretariat reported on recent developments in forest certification in ITTO producer member countries. As of mid-2024, the total area of certified forests (FSC + PEFC) in ITTO producing member countries was 42.8 million hectares, representing 9.4% of the world total. The number of chain of custody (CoC) certificates in

ITTO producer countries were 7,674 certificates, which is more than 10% of the world total. The FSC certified forest areas in ITTO producer countries reached 24.2 million hectares which was 15% of global FSC certification, while the PEFC certified area reached 18.6 million hectares, accounting for about 6.3% of the world total of PEFC. About 10 national certification schemes were endorsed by PEFC as of 2024 namely: CERFLOR of Brazil, MTCC of Malaysia, IFCC of Indonesia, PAFC of Gabon and NCCF of India, VFCO of Vietnam, PAFC of Cameroon, PAFC of Republic of Congo, F.T.I. of Thailand and GFC of Guyana.

The delegate of Malaysia provided an update that, as of October 2024, a total of 6.4 million ha of natural forests and 148,000 hectares of forest plantation has been certified under the Malaysia Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS). Additionally, 369 companies currently hold chain of custody certification under the MTCS reflecting the Malaysian steadfast dedication to sustainable forest management and responsible timber practices.

The delegate of Papua New Guinea stated that, they are developing timber legality verification standard through a project funded by the EU on Timber Legitimate Verification System that will strengthen forest certification in Papua New Guinea. For Papua New Guinea, a number of timber companies have already been certified.

The delegate of Panama informed that they have 65% territory covered by forests and also have plantations for commercial purposes. Around 40,000 hectares forest area have achieved FSC certification in Panama. However, as a producing country, even though there's a traceability system funded by different phases by ITTO projects, Panama still needs to extend the traceability system to cover the entire country.

The delegate of India briefly updated that they have come up with the forest and wood certification scheme in December 2023, which covers the natural forest and the trees outside the forest areas grown by the farmers.

The delegate of Indonesia also updated that there is a mandatory national system in Indonesia for forest certification which is known as the Timber Legality and Sustainability System (SVLK). Currently there were approximately 12.9 million hectares of natural production forests that have been certified under the system.

(iii) APEC EGILAT and ITTO collaboration

The Secretariat reported the participation of ITTO to the following APEC-EGILAT meeting agendas:

- i) Online Focused Group Discussion, organized by the APEC EGILAT Indonesia Project Team of Developing Integrated Timber Data for Xylaria Networking on 16 January 2024. ITTO made presentation entitled 'Sustainable Pathway of Traded Tropical timber in APEC Economies';
- ii) Workshop on Wood Identification Technologies for APEC Members, organized by the APEC EGILAT Indonesia Project Team of Developing Integrated Timber Data for Xylaria Networking on 23-25 April 2024. ITTO made a presentation entitled 'ITTO's responses to emerging timber market requirements'; and
- iii) The 26th APEC EGILAT Plenary Meeting and its associated workshop organized by Peru's National Forestry and Wildlife Service (SERFOR) held in Lima, Peru, on 12-15 August 2024. At the workshop, ITTO made a presentation entitled 'Innovation in information system in APEC Economies for traceability and ensuring the legal origin of timber'. At the Plenary meeting, ITTO made a presentation to update ITTO's efforts to support the use of sustainably produced tropical timber in domestic markets of member countries through projects implementation in Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and India.

* * *