

Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) Statement to the ITTO 61st Council

Securing a Future for Forests and People

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Secretariat, and Colleagues,

As the International Tropical Timber Council convenes in Panama, at a moment when the Preparatory Working Group advances the roadmap for a successor to the ITTA (following its extension to 2029), we face a defining opportunity. The ITTO can now align its mission with the urgency of the climate, biodiversity, and equity crises. CSAG affirms that a sustainable tropical timber trade is indispensable—but only if it is intrinsically tied to the health of natural forests, the rights and security of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), including Women and Youth, and transparent governance.

1. Safeguarding Natural Forest Integrity

Natural tropical forests are irreplaceable. CSAG calls on ITTO to reaffirm Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in natural forests as the core of its mandate and to channel the new financing architecture toward strengthening these systems. The Council should ensure that a majority of funds directly support SFM and community-led conservation, and that Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets are embedded in ITTO's Strategic Action Plan.

2. Advancing Rights, Equity, and Local Livelihoods

Securing IPLC including rural women tenure and participation is the most effective safeguard against deforestation. CSAG urges the Council to adopt Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as a non-negotiable prerequisite for all ITTO-funded activities and to establish a dedicated funding window for IPLC and women-led enterprises within the Programme Line on Forest Landscape Restoration and Resilient Livelihoods.

3. Ensuring Transparent and Credible Markets

Global timber and NTFP markets demand traceability and accountability. CSAG calls for public disclosure of key project and concession data, the creation of a joint CSAG–TAG mechanism to address deforestation-free supply chains, and the co-design of the Annual Market Discussion to include women- and community-led enterprises as central actors in legality and sustainability.

4. Strengthening ITTO's Effectiveness for 2030 and Beyond

Predictable financing, robust monitoring, participatory and inclusive governance remain critical. The forthcoming Successor ITTA must embed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), establish measurable targets for expanding natural forest areas under community-led, sustainable, and legal management, and position ITTO at the vanguard of integrating forests into global climate, biodiversity, gender justice and human-rights goals.

In closing, tropical forests stand at a crossroads. The trade in sustainably managed tropical timber can be a cornerstone of climate and biodiversity solutions—if it unites ecological integrity, social equity, and responsible markets. CSAG stands ready to work with all Members to ensure this Council marks a true turning point toward a stronger, more equitable, and strategically future-focused ITTO.

Thank you.

CSAG Chair

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