



**ITTO-JICA Joint Side Event at TICAD V
“Efforts to Advance Sustainable Management of
African Forests”**

Yokohama, Japan, 1 June 2013

**Keynote Statement by Emmanuel Ze Meka, Executive Director,
International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)**

Her Excellency Dr. Toshiko Abe, Parliamentary Vice-Minister of
Foreign Affairs of Japan,

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to this side-event on “Efforts to
advance sustainable management of African forests” jointly
organized by ITTO and JICA in the framework of TICAD V.
TICAD V represents a good opportunity to highlight the
importance of forests for African development.

Forests in Africa offer an enormous potential for development.
They provide essential goods and services necessary to sustain
the livelihood of forest dependent people, including their
contribution to food and health security. These forests also offer

a strong potential for development through the sustainable harvesting and trade of forests resources, including timber and non-timber products.

Employment can be created and skills can be developed in all areas pertaining to sustainable forest management, including the management of natural and planted forests, further processing and value addition to forest resources, and trade. Forests in Africa also play a crucial role in the fight against climate change, including in mitigation and adaptation strategies, and help preserve the important biodiversity of the continent.

These social, economic and environmental functions of forests constitute the pillars of sustainable forest management, a concept under which ITTO operates in order to assist its member countries to achieve sustainable development.

ITTO has developed several policy guidelines, covering all the salient aspects of sustainable forest management, in order to implement activities in the field geared towards the achievement of these functions and has supported more than 800 projects that provide for this field-level implementation.

In Africa, more than 120 projects with total ITTO funding of about US\$ 70 million have been implemented since the establishment of the Organization. These projects have spanned the scope of ITTO's work in various areas such as land-use planning, field implementation of forest management, protection of biodiversity, promotion of community forestry, further processing of timber, promotion of trade, forestry training and research, etc.

The assessment of the management of forest in the ITTO African member countries shows that the area of forests under sustainable forest management, which was 4.3 million ha in 2005, had increased by more than 50% to reach 6.56 million by 2010, while areas covered by management plans also substantially increased from 10 million ha in 2005 to more than 28 million ha in 2010.

These trends confirm the efforts made by ITTO member countries in Africa to progress towards the sustainable management of their forests, with the support of the international community.

However, in spite of these efforts and in spite of the benefits that forests can offer to induce sustainable development, the situation of forest in Africa continue to be a matter of great concern: deforestation continues unabated in some countries, illegal forestry activities are still widespread, including illegal logging and recently a dramatic loss of biodiversity perpetuated by criminal gangs, affecting in particular some emblematic wildlife species such as elephants and rhinoceros, even in protected areas.

It is also obvious that the contribution of forests to African economic growth remains marginal in spite of the great potential.

Efforts are therefore needed to continue to harness the full potential of African forests for their contribution to African development.

These efforts should focus on the revision of forest policies and legislation, including the promotion of access to forest resources by local communities, on enforcement of laws and regulations and in general on the promotion of good governance, on capacity building on relevant aspects related to

sustainable forest management, including forest inventory and certification, value addition to forest resources, including further processing and on skills to promote sustainable forest products trade.

The implementation of forestry-related climate change strategies can also offer good opportunities for development for the communities and nations concerned, as well as the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) under the CBD Convention as it relates to forests.

ITTO is committed to continue to support its member countries in Africa in order to make their forests become an engine for development. The new International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) which entered into force in December 2011 offers a good framework to progress towards this objective. Indeed the focus of the Agreement, as mentioned in its objectives, is to bring tropical forests to play a central role in contributing to sustainable development and in alleviating poverty. The experience gained by ITTO in implementing the sustainable management of tropical forests over its 26 years of existence will be tapped in order to meet this objective.

To foster progress towards this end, ITTO has taken the opportunity of TICAD to develop three project proposals in some important areas of the sustainable management of African forests. These project proposals will be introduced more substantially in the presentations that will ensue. However, allow me to highlight the importance of these projects.

The first project is related to the use of criteria and indicators to promote the sustainable management of African forests. Criteria and indicators are tools that allow us to determine the status of the core functions of forests, namely the social, economic and ecological functions and to assess trends in the status of forest management over time. The project, which will build capacity for the use of criteria and indicators and strengthen national frameworks, is intimately linked to forest auditing and certification, which are also addressing the same core functions of forests.

The second project proposal will focus on establishing a forest monitoring system, based on satellite and radar images, with the view to, *inter alia*, detect illegal activities in forest protected areas and to assist in forest law enforcement. The project, in its

first phase, will help strengthen the management and conservation of ten existing conservation areas, with the possibility to build on experience and results obtained to expand to more conservation areas. At a time when protected areas in the continent remain subject to enormous pressure from illegal activities, such as illegal logging, illegal farming, forest fires and more importantly poaching, the project will help concerned countries to swiftly track illegal activities and help conserve forests and forest resources.

The promotion of intra-African trade is a key element to boost economic growth in Africa. In this connection the third project formulated by ITTO will focus on the promotion of intra-African trade in timber and timber products. In 2007, a study carried out by ITTO revealed that African trade in timber and timber products was estimated at about four billion dollars. However the contribution of the intra-African trade amounted to less than 10% of this value. There is therefore an enormous potential to boost the intra-African trade in timber and timber products to contribute to African economic growth.

These three projects represent only a sample of the types of activities that ITTO can implement in order to assist African

countries to make the best use of forests and forest resources to contribute to African sustainable development. We hope that our proposals generate interest among both member countries and donors during this important TICAD V meeting. ITTO stands ready to continue to work “hand in hand” with African countries and the international community for a vibrant and prosperous Africa.