



**Launching Ceremony for the ITTO Project on
Management of the Emerald Triangle Protected
Forests Complex to Promote Cooperation for
Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation between
Thailand, Cambodia and Laos - Phase III
[ITTO Project PD 577/10 Rev.1 (F)]
1 October 2012, Phnom Penh, Cambodia**

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

H.E. Uk Sokhon, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries,
Cambodia

H.E. Dr Yin Kim Sean, Secretary of State of Environment, Cambodia

H.E. Dr. Chheng Kimsun, Director General of Cambodia Forestry Administration;

H.E. Mr. Yoshihiro Higuchi, Minister/Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Japan in the
Kingdom of Cambodia

H.E. Mr Surapol MAneepong, Minister of the Royal Thai Embassy

Dr. Prayut Lorsuwansiri, Deputy Director General of the Royal Forest Department of Thailand

Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honour and pleasure for me to address you all on this historic occasion of the launching of this Project on “Management of the Emerald Triangle Protected Forests Complex to Promote Cooperation for Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos - Phase III which is referred as ITTO Project PD 577/10 Rev.1 (F).”

Let me first of all acknowledge with gratitude the presence of a number of high-ranking officials from Cambodia, Thailand and Laos at this launching ceremony. I am pleased to inform you that ITTO has been a long-time partner in the management of the Emerald Triangle Protected Forests Complex between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Indeed this is the third Phase of the project.

In fact, ITTO first began this partnership with Thailand over a decade ago (in 2001), by initiating a management planning process for Phataem Protected Forest Complex, comprising five protected areas in Ubon Rachathani Province in northeast Thailand. In the period 2008-2010, our partnership strengthened to become a tri-national cooperation on biodiversity conservation activities with the involvement of local communities living in or close to the buffer zones of the protected forests.

The second Phase of the project was implemented with a Thailand component and a Cambodian component which resulted in the conservation of the genetic resources of plants and wildlife in

Cambodia's protected forests in Preah Vihear Province, one of the largest intact blocks of natural dry deciduous forest on the Asian mainland.

Based on the results of Phases I and II over the past decade, we are now launching the third phase of the project to further strengthen the protection of transboundary habitats of wide-ranging wildlife species in the Emerald Triangle. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Cambodian Forestry Administration and the Thai Royal Forest Department for their fruitful collaboration. I would also like to express my appreciation to ITTO donors, namely the governments of Japan, Switzerland, USA and France for their contributions to the first two phases of this project.

For this third phase of the project, I wish to recognize the great contribution announced by the government of Japan on the occasion of UN CBD COP 10 in Nagoya in 2010. The generous pledge by the Government of Japan to finance on-going work in the Emerald Triangle under the ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity has brought us together today. We are very proud of this partnership and I wish to sincerely thank the government of Japan for its long-term financing and commitment to transboundary biodiversity conservation in the Emerald Triangle.

It is our fervent hope that Phase III of the project will pave a sustainable path for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Emerald Triangle in close collaboration with the Cambodian Forestry Administration, the Royal Forest Department of Thailand and Lao PDR Forest Department. I also hope that Lao PDR will soon become a member of ITTO by ratifying the International Tropical Timber Agreement, 2006 so that this tri-national cooperation can be further enhanced.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Tropical Timber Council has shown its support for transboundary conservation in tropical forests. It is my hope that member countries will continue to strengthen biodiversity conservation under the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), 2006 which entered into force at the end of last year. Indeed, we look forward to more successful stories of biodiversity conservation initiatives with increased support from the ITTO donor community.

In its policy development guidance to members, ITTO has always stressed the importance of conserving the biodiversity of tropical forests in the context of enhancing sustainable forest management. In 1993, for example, ITTO published its Guidelines for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Tropical Production Forests and revised them in 2009 as the ITTO/IUCN Guidelines for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Tropical Production Forests. This policy document outlines specific actions that policymakers, forest managers and other stakeholders have to take in order to improve biodiversity conservation in forests used for the production of forest goods and services.

ITTO's most recent initiative in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use has been the ITTO-CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity, launched in May 2011. This Initiative is designed to enhance biodiversity conservation in tropical forests involving the direct participation of stakeholders and addressing deforestation and forest degradation as the key drivers of biodiversity loss in tropical forests. I am pleased to inform you that ITTO will report on the progress of this Collaborative Initiative at the upcoming CBD COP 11 in Hyderabad, India next week.

In light of the importance of promoting sustainable forest management in a holistic way, I hope that the Emerald Triangle Project – Phase III launched today will showcase an excellent example of

long-term transboundary conservation in tropical forests and convince the unaware of the immense value of these forests.

Furthermore, I hope that the outcomes and lessons learnt from the Emerald Triangle Project will be of value to national, regional and international biodiversity-related policy development initiatives and field project implementation. In this connection, I am pleased to know that the Emerald Triangle Project team will make a presentation at the ITTO side-event during CBD COP 11 and I warmly invite all of you who would be present at the CBD COP 11 to attend this side-event.

Finally, I hope that this long-term partnership established in the Emerald Triangle between ITTO, Cambodian Forestry Administration, Thai Royal Forest Department and Lao PDR Forest Department will continue to advance the conservation and sustainable management of tropical forest resources in the region with the support of donors, including the Government of Japan and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. I further hope that the Emerald Triangle would remain as a symbol of the long-term partnership between Japan and the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Kingdom of Thailand and Lao PDR.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Transboundary biodiversity conservation is a big challenge in many tropical countries. ITTO is proud to be a leader in the establishment and management of transboundary reserves like the one we are promoting here for the benefit of current and future generations.

Thank you for your kind attention.