

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION



NEWS RELEASE

Entry into force of new treaty high on Council agenda

LA ANTIGUA GUATEMALA, GUATEMALA, 14 November 2011: Consideration of the entry into force of a new governing treaty will be a major item on the agenda of the 47th session of the International Tropical Timber Council, which began today (14 November) in La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala.

The Council is the governing body of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). It meets at least once a year to discuss a wide-ranging agenda aimed at promoting sustainable tropical forest management and the trade of sustainably produced tropical timber.

Issues such as strengthening ITTO's work on biodiversity conservation and tropical forests and developments in climate change negotiations of relevance to tropical forests will also feature in the Council's deliberations throughout the week. ITTO's Executive Director, Emmanuel Ze Meka, in his opening statement to Council, alerted members to the Organization's activities during 2011, which is ITTO's 25th anniversary and the International Year of Forests, stressing collaborative activities carried out with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and others. The Executive Director also urged Council members to strengthen the Organization by ratifying the 2006 International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) and by providing adequate funding for its administrative and strategic activities. Council Chairman Joachim Bilé (Gabon) also stressed the importance of countries ratifying the new ITTA, noting that it would be desirable for the new agreement to enter into force as soon as possible.

Also speaking at the opening session was Juan Alfonso de Leon Garcia, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food of Guatemala. In his keynote address Mr. Garcia stressed the importance of tropical forests, including in providing environmental services like biodiversity conservation. Josué Iván Morales Dardón, Director of Guatemala's National Forests Institute (INAB) also addressed the Council, noting the continuing strong collaboration between his country and ITTO. He pledged Guatemala's continuing support for ITTO.

Christian Magnagna (Minister of Forests and Water, Gabon) also addressed the Council at its opening session, informing members of progress towards sustainable forest management in his

country. Minister Magnagna welcomed ITTO's support to Gabon over the past two decades which has assisted with improving SFM in many areas.

The Council will also deal with several other key issues at its 47th session. A new biennial work program for 2012-13 will be considered and adopted. The status of the implementation of the five ITTO Thematic Programmes approved on a pilot basis at the 44th ITTC session will be reviewed. The Council will be briefed on collaborative activities to improve management of tropical tree species listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Council will also undertake its annual assessment of the world timber situation and, led by its Trade Advisory Group, will convene the annual market discussion on the theme "The Crisis, the Impact and the Recovery". Several side events are also scheduled during the week, including sessions on timber tracking using DNA, REDD readiness, global conservation standards, the work of the Responsible Asia Forestry and Trade program and community based forest management in Guatemala/Mesoamerica (the latter convened by Council's Civil Society Advisory Group).

For more information on ITTO and the 47th ITTC Session, go to www.itto.int.