

COMMUNIQUÉ

International Tropical Timber Organization and Convention on Biological Diversity Enter into Partnership

Tokyo, 2 March 2010 – The secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) signed a memorandum of understanding today to closely collaborate over the coming four years. “This agreement represents a further step in the efforts under the Convention to engage key organizations in joint efforts to promote conservation and sustainable use of forests,” said Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the occasion of the signature.

Mr. Emmanuel Ze Meka, ITTO Executive Director, added: “We all recognize the importance of conserving and sustainably using tropical forest resources, and their important role in the overall sustainable development of the countries in the tropics. Tropical forests host a large majority of biodiversity on earth; representing an invaluable asset for the people and especially for the local communities that depend on them for their livelihoods. Based on this agreement, we expect to enlarge the knowledge base, information and activities to further promote the sustainable use and conservation of tropical forest resources.”

The Memorandum of Understanding is based on a request from the governing bodies of both secretariats. The 60 members of the International Tropical Timber Council, representing about 80% of the world’s tropical forests and over 90% of the global tropical timber trade, requested the Executive Director of the ITTO to explore options for a work plan including targeted joint activities with international organizations, including the Convention Secretariat. In May 2008, the 193 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity requested the Executive Secretary, in decision IX/5, to carry out thematic and/or regional workshops to support Parties’ efforts in implementing the programme of work on forest biodiversity and that such workshops should be carried out, among others, in close cooperation with ITTO.

“Through this partnership, we are honouring the requests made by our governing bodies. Our joint activities will enable us to provide better service in support of tropical forests and biodiversity,” Mr. Djoghlaif and Mr. Ze Meka agreed.

The agreement is aimed at facilitating the implementation of activities linked to the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forest biodiversity within the CBD and ITTO work programmes. Concrete joint activities for 2010 and 2011 include collaboration on the seamless bridging of the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 and the International Year of Forests in 2011; the organization of an International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests; the development, use and dissemination of publications of common interest; and the development of a support programme for the implementation of the CBD programme of work on forest biodiversity in ITTO member countries.

The agreement will be in force until December 2014, and can be extended if mutually agreed.

Tropical forests are home to more than two thirds of all known animals and plant species, and they produce globally important ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, clean water supplies, and over 5,000 commercial forest products. Tropical forests are therefore key ecosystems for achieving the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources. The Convention on Biological Diversity and ITTO aim to promote the management of all tropical production forests according to sustainability criteria.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from utilization of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries committed to preserving life on Earth. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety a supplementary treaty to the Convention seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 156 countries and the European Community are party to the Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal.

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) is an intergovernmental organization promoting the conservation and sustainable management, use and trade of tropical forest resources. It was established in 1986 under the auspices of the United Nations, and has its headquarters in Yokohama, Japan. Its 60 members are signatories of the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) – the only legally binding, UN-based instrument on tropical forests. They represent about 80% of the world's tropical forests and over 90% of the global tropical timber trade. In its work, ITTO facilitates discussion, consultation, field projects and international cooperation on issues relating to the international trade and utilization of tropical timber and the sustainable management of its resource base. ITTO develops internationally agreed policy documents to promote sustainable forest management and forest conservation and assists tropical member countries to adapt such policies to local circumstances and to implement them in the field through projects. In addition, ITTO collects, analyses and disseminates data on the production and trade of tropical timber and funds a range of projects and other action aimed at developing sustainable forest management practices and forest industries at both community and industrial scales.

This communiqué has been posted on the website of the CBD and on the website of the ITTO – further information on the CBD and the ITTO is available at:

www.cbd.int

www.itto.int

For additional information, please contact:

Eduardo Mansur on +81 45 223 1110 or at rfm@itto.int

Tim Christophersen on +1 514 287 7036 or at tim.christophersen@cbd.int
