

**Statement by the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) to the ITTO 55<sup>th</sup> Session  
held in Lomé, Togo from 2 – 7 December 2019**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

CSAG would like to thank the Government of Togo and the City of Lomé for the excellent hospitality and great venue in hosting this Council session.

CSAG would also like to thank the ITTO for funding the preparatory workshop to involve women in Togo just before this Council session and we encourage ITTO to replicate this in all other ITTO member countries.

We applaud Council and the Secretariat for this CSAG opportunity to host a panel at the Joint Committee session. The topic, on the role of Women and Markets, is an appropriate adjunct to the Trade Advisory Group's (TAG) Annual Market Discussion on Added Value Processing in Africa – the Opportunities and Challenges.

Many speakers, from the Honourable Ministers' speeches, to the Annual Market Discussion this year, and even TAG's statement have focused on the need to pursue and ramp up timber plantations—ostensibly to create jobs, enhance livelihoods and combat climate change through carbon sequestration. The world wants timber, and it does not care where the timber comes from. CSAG recognizes that natural tropical forests cannot cover all the increasing demands on timber, and other forest resources. There is a role for plantations. CSAG is not saying we ignore their role. But these should not be the main focus of ITTO. Governments have the responsibility to balance sustainable development against conservation for the good of all, not for the elite or for profit.

ITTO and many organisations and government studies and research have tried to discover how best to increase and make successful timber plantations. The need for ITTO to be relevant is urgent in the light of declining funding to ITTO. As Mr. Mafa Chipeta pointed out at this Council session's Annual Market Discussion, there are many issues and challenges to make timber plantations a success, and having countries jumping on the bandwagon does not make it a success. Imagine the loans, investments and finance needed to make this happen, not to mention the skills, capacity, and materials that go towards creating a plantation, and the need for land in the first place for growing the non-native trees species.

While we welcome the idea that ITTO is inviting its members to a new debate, of course an old debate in forestry circle, we urge the ITTO to approach the debate of plantations with caution, and to conduct a cost-benefit analysis before further actions are taken.

But we also note the good work carried out by the New Generation Plantation (NGP) platform to learn about better plantation management through real world experiences and to influence others to follow good examples. The New Generation Plantations project collects knowledge and good practices in plantation forestry in order to promote better plantation management. Well designed and managed plantations can relieve the strain on the planet's remaining natural forests by providing fibre for timber, paper and wood energy.

While it is true tree plantations can reduce the need to log natural forests and then contribute to the conservation of forest biodiversity, there many other issues to consider, and we just highlight two:

- The definitional issue regarding defining forest inclusive of tree plantations;
- In terms for climate change, replacing natural forest with tree plantations may be difficult to register as deforestation and this is likely to allow ITTO producer countries, with REDD+ programs, to mask the loss of natural forests;

When ITTO was established in 1985, a key and unanimously agreed focus was to make sustainable forest management and forest conservation a reality. Forests were and are still being badly managed, its resources over-exploited and are being lost. Strategies and action plans were created, studies were carried out, while ITTO member Governments pledged to move towards Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). Look around you today—over 30 years down the road since ITTO was established— even more natural forests have been lost and degraded, through a combination of incompetence, inadequate capacity, knowledge, laws including policies, governance, corruption, ... the list goes on.

Climate change is here! Recently, thousands of scientists came together in solidarity and signed a petition to state unequivocally that climate change is a reality, and it will only get worse. They want governments to listen, and take action. Our children want us to take action now—not sometime in the future.

Forest biodiversity is being threatened and lost, continued to be over-exploited, illegally harvested and traded, and species are going extinct at an alarming rate, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities living, including women and the youth living in the forests and margins of forests are being threatened, and most of our focus has been to increase raw materials for GDP growth, revenue, and jobs. Markets and supply chains are only one aspect of the huge issue of habitat loss!

There are other interventions, beyond climate change considerations. ITTO can play a role in the implementation of global commitments, especially in the implementation and delivery of the current Aichi Targets under the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020. Addressing timber and forest resources over-exploitation and amplifying conservation and livelihood benefits from community forests and sustainable use and trade should be integrated in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

When are we going to go back towards considering how best to manage our natural forests sustainably—for its many services and benefits we rely upon? Governments need to wake up to the fact that their forests are the greatest natural resource a country possesses. Why risk losing them to greed, and consumption driven by many factors including a system of capitalism, where profits have to grow and grow every year?

We who are present here at the Council are all middle class and considered among the well-to-do back in our home countries. We use the excuse of planning strategy and guidance on forests for the poor: we say it is for job creation, revenue and livelihood, but is it in reality to drive world consumption for timber products?

We urge ITTO to go back to basics—focus on sustainable forest management and species conservation for sustainable utilisation—for the people of this world, and for the

health of our planet. Only natural tropical forests can safeguard and provide all the other services and benefits, while providing us with raw materials—timber of course, also non-timber forest produce, traditional and pharmaceutical medicines, food, recreation, wildlife, watershed management, etc.

Throughout the long history of ITTO, the organisation has done great work in developing Guidelines to help SFM. These have been published and are still being refined. We urge Council to adopt the latest Guidance documents—the Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics, and the ITTO Environmental and Social Management ESM Guidelines.

ITTO also provided funds via the Governments of the USA and Japan to a CSAG member, TRAFFIC, to work with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to develop the Guidelines for Verifying Timber Legality for Customs. Bespoke local guidance is currently being developed for some of the ITTO members' Customs administrations to verify timber trade legality, in particular for Vietnam, China, Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, and Malaysia with funding from the FAO FLEGT Small Grants Programme and UK DFID FGMC.

We urge Council to work with members to find markets for sustainably sourced higher value timber species from natural forests—not 10-year-old teak from plantations—and work with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities including women and the youth, to manage forests sustainably and to ensure sustainable use of their many forest produce. Do not be distracted. Work with the men, women and the youth in developing countries, who have vested interests in sustainable forest management, look at domestic demand to leverage on sustainability of natural forests.

CSAG will continue to advocate and share ITTO Guidelines widely. We also recommend Council prepares a decision for the Secretariat to conduct a regular monitoring and evaluation in collaboration with CSAG, perhaps through an annual questionnaire survey of ITTO members on progress towards implementation of the guidelines developed by ITTO, and to share the results with Council yearly.

We commend the Secretariat on initiating the new Programmatic Approach and the four new Programme Lines. We will provide our comments in writing after consulting with all our CSAG committee members, many of whom are not able to join us at this Council, partly due to funding constraints.

We urge ITTO members to increase stakeholder engagement in SFM and sustainable supply chain policy elaboration and implementation at the national level. Work with civil society.

While there are considerations to have the TAG and CSAG panel events back to back, this did not happen this time due to unavoidable challenges. We urge Council and the Secretariat to make it a feature of future Council sessions to have a joint CSAG-TAG plenary event. We can work together on the topics of interest to both parties and to Council to provide relevant advice and inputs to Council's deliberations.

CSAG strongly urges Council to ensure there is sufficient funding for the representative participation of CSAG in Council sessions, and also in other ITTO organised events.

CSAG wishes to remind Council and the Secretariat that CSAG members focuses on women and gender, livelihoods, but also on the sustainability of forest management including community forests, good forest governance, and legal trade including CITES.

We have other recommendations, which are included in the annex and will be distributed to the members for you to read and digest. We thank you for your attention.

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Annex 1: CSAG continues to recommend the following actions for the Council's consideration, including those recommendations from the last few Council sessions which are still valid:

1. The ITTO should encourage all member countries to adopt the successful field pilot and demonstration projects to the rest of the country in a strategic and planned manner.
2. We encourage ITTO to research and publish an annual country questionnaire survey on how each ITTO member country is performing on legality of timber resources in trade, progress towards SFM, Forest Landscape Restoration, environmental issues, the women-based community forest enterprises, the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and other small producers and their participation in markets and trade. Such data and analysis could help the performance of member countries on land tenure; gender mainstreaming; levelling of CBFM (Community Based Forest Management) implementation; revising policies for the allocation of forest resources; promoting transparency in forest production and trade; forest, timber and NTFP certification, sustainable public procurement, in particular related to tropical wood-based products and tropical NTFPs; and a strong commitment towards implementation of forest law enforcement. To achieve the latter, CSAG sees recognition and implementation of the Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit of the ICCWC as a key tool. CSAG is willing to work with ITTO to develop the survey methodology for the monitoring.
3. We encourage ITTO formally to introduce a Grievance mechanism that encompasses a whistle-blower protection programme in response to violations of SFM at the country level. This will help to support national appeals processes and ensure that grievances are acknowledged, checked and acted upon. Clear rule of law requires that the ITTO provides appropriate remedies and effective redress mechanisms. These may include appeals mechanisms, as well as efficient monitoring mechanisms to ensure the impartial and just implementation of laws, rules and regulations on SFM. Here, claim and recourse mechanisms should be in place and easily accessible to allow affected communities to question decisions and to have access to justice and remedies. CSAG is willing to assist ITTO in setting up such a mechanism.
4. CSAG recommends that ITTO continues to expand its work and influence on reforming policy and governance in order to address the new global challenges and capture emerging opportunities to promote SFM, gender equity, and social and economic development. These governance and institutional challenges, including tenure rights, must be addressed in order for countries to move forward. ITTO should more fully use its credibility and convening power to help countries understand and address these challenges.

5. ITTO should give more attention to the nature and extent of project participation processes and the context for empowerment of stakeholders including gender consideration in formulating, approving, implementing and evaluating its projects. In selecting short-term projects, preference should be given to those that add value to existing and longer-term empowerment processes, and the most effective participatory mechanisms for the specific level of participation. This will ensure that participation is not perceived just as an issue of attendance but an issue of engagement and a central part of a key long-term process that leads to better and lasting results. CSAG is concerned that there may not have been social sciences expertise in the project proposal evaluation teams to review the projects, during audits and final evaluation of completed projects. This comes across strongly in many of the presentations on projects in the Committees sessions. CSAG is pleased to offer its assistance in such evaluations, especially at the proposal stage.

6. ITTO should encourage Governments to involve all actors (Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, private sector, government decision-makers) in all process reforms at all levels working on the future of tropical forests management (REDD+, Tenure reforms, Forest reforms, etc.) from their very early stage of reflection to their implementation.

7. Council should encourage Member States actively to support the ITTO/CBD Collaborative Initiative to Conserve Tropical Forest and to pay special attention to NTFP. New tools such as the CBD-recognised FairWild Standard<sup>1</sup> for sustainable management of wild-harvested plants and the trade of non-timber forest products are available. We recommend to strengthen existing or update National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and to integrate sustainability and SFM in the NBSAPs. We are drawing attention to the new Toolkit for implementation of the CBD's Global Strategy for Plants Conservation that contributes to the delivery on Aichi Biodiversity Targets and provides practical approaches to SFM.

8. Council should further encourage Member States to actively support implementing the CBD's Decision adopted at the last CoP 14, i.e. CBD/COP/DEC/14/7 on 'Sustainable wildlife management' and the therein included 'Voluntary Guidance for a Sustainable Wild Meat Sector', and to should see to collaborate with the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) in supporting implementation of the related work.

9. ITTO should consider promoting an internationally accepted definition of legality on forests and trade for reference by all countries, private sector and other stakeholders. After all, the laws of a country should be respected, complied with, and enforced. In the interest of legality verification that has the confidence of multi-stakeholders, some form of standardised

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<sup>1</sup> The details and standard can be seen at: <http://www.fairwild.org/standard>. Progress in Achieving the Targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation 2011-2020 UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/18/3, available through <https://www.cbd.int/gspc/documents.shtml> or the GSPC implementation toolkit Target 12 Implementation <http://www.plants2020.net/target-12>

definition should be considered. ITTO should be seen as leading this thrust. It can be seen as a genuine task of the organisation, and no other international forum is taking the lead on this. WWF and TRAFFIC have developed a Common Legality Framework for Assessing Legality of Forest Operations, Timber Processing and Trade<sup>2</sup> that has been compiled for 16 countries. We offer this framework as a tool for further discussion and reference by ITTO.

10. ITTO should build on the knowledge gained and establish regular monitoring and reporting on the status of the forest tenure and ownership, drawing upon the available data collected by ITTO partners and collaborating organisations with this mandate and expertise.

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<sup>2</sup> The details and use of the framework can be found at: <http://gftn.panda.org/resources/tools/?202483/Framework-for-Assessing-Legality-of-Forestry-Operations-Timber-Processing-and-Trade>