The thirty-second session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-32) commenced on Monday with opening statements from Manoel Sobrã Filho, Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Jürgen Blaser, Chair of the ITTC, Dewa Made Beratha, Governor of Bali, Ibu Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of Indonesia, and others. The Council addressed organizational matters and heard reports on the recent Informal Advisory Group meeting and ITTO International Workshop on Comparability and Equivalence of Forest Certification Schemes. Delegates also met in a joint Committee session and in sessions of the Committees on Forest Industry (CFI) and on Reforestation and Forest Management (CRF).

**COUNCIL SESSION**

**OPENING STATEMENTS:** Manoel Sobrã Filho, ITTO Executive Director, welcomed delegates to ITTC-32. He noted progress toward achieving international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed forests, particularly through policy reform in ITTO member countries and the need to improve forest management on the ground, and described ITTO efforts to train forest managers in sustainable forest management (SFM) practices. He highlighted ITTO’s portfolio of projects to promote SFM, but stressed that the ITTO can and must do more. He said the ITTC-31 decision to combat illegal logging and illegal trade in timber is one of the most important ITTC decisions in terms of advancing commitments to SFM. He highlighted the lack of funds as the primary factor undermining SFM, and called for a massive public education campaign to popularize the concept that these services need to be paid for by the international community.

Jürgen Blaser, ITTC Chair, noted that Objective 2000 has not yet been achieved, and stressed the need to ensure that forthcoming negotiations of the new agreement help create SFM and fair and transparent trade. Highlighting Indonesia’s role in tackling the issue of forest law enforcement and illegal illegal trade in forest products, he urged the ITTO to formulate concrete actions to implement its recent decision on this issue. He also expressed hope that ITTC-32 would critically review the draft Guidelines for the Restoration, Management and Rehabilitation of Degraded and Secondary Tropical Forests. He highlighted the decision by a Bali Impossible to further promote the issue. He underscored the need for the ITTO to become the platform for stakeholder dialogue on SFM, calling an ITTO project in Africa on fostering a partnership as a promising development to this end.

Dewa Made Beratha, Governor of Bali, highlighted Bali’s efforts to preserve its forests. He welcomed delegates to Bali and wished delegates success in their deliberations.

Ibu Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of Indonesia, outlined the five priorities of the Indonesian Government, including: addressing illegal logging and trade; restructuring the forest industry; dealing with forest fires; decentralizing forest management; and developing industrial plantation forests. She highlighted a moratorium on forest conversion, and called for greater international cooperation to curb illegal practices. She hoped the ITTO would assist in endeavors to implement SFM, particularly rehabilitation and conservation activities.

Muhammad Prakosa, Minister of Forestry of Indonesia, described the Indonesian forestry sector, underscoring the alarming rate of deforestation. He emphasized the gap between supply and demand of timber, highlighted efforts to restructure the forestry industry, and lamented the minimal success of reforestation programmes. He called for full commitment to combating illegal logging and trade, hoped the outcomes of the 2001 Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) meeting held in Bali would result in concrete action, highlighted a memorandum of understanding with the UK on FLEG, and expressed hope that ITTC-32 would result in concrete progress on this issue.

Catherine Boka Agoussi Angele, Minister of Forests of Côte d’Ivoire, outlined her country’s integrated forest policy, which focuses on sustainable management of forests based on management plans; includes the establishment of forest plantations, a ban on exports, and the creation of ITTO-type funds to finance anti-degradation and poverty reduction efforts; and seeks to maintain the environmental and socioeconomic functions of forests while providing for management of forest stands and agricultural activities in forest reserves. She highlighted concerns relating to certification, stressing the need to understand its impact on the purchase price of certified forest products, and said the ITTO and forest certification systems should help produce nations and countries overcome difficulties to achieve certification of tropical forests.

Kenichi Mizuno, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Japan, emphasized the need for greater efforts to fulfill the ITTO Yokohama Action Plan on implementation of forest laws and SFM at the local level. Expressing Japan’s determination to continue support for tackling illegal logging in the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America, he called for ITTO and others to join the Asia Forest Partnership on promoting SFM. He stressed the need for the ITTO to participate in the WSSD, and called for concrete actions to assist African member countries, which should be acknowledged as a WSSP partnership.

Jauw Mayr Maldonado, Minister of Environment of Colombia, stated that forest management and biodiversity are of the highest priority for Colombia. He stressed the need to respond to challenges to forest management posed by climate change, highlighted the mangrove workplan and the management of secondary forests as extremely important to countries with such ecosystems, and called for donor attention to these issues. He also emphasized the need to reconcile the reforestation and rehabilitation of forests with techniques for maintaining biodiversity.

Geoff Kaimowitz, Director General of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), highlighted the important role of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) in strengthening formal and informal cooperation to serve the needs of countries more effectively. He underscored the continuing importance of forest research in order to critically analyze what has been done and to improve forest practices in the future.
Wulf Killmann, Director of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Forest Products Division, highlighted benefits of the complementary relationship between the ITTO and FAO, and outlined several areas of collaboration related to, inter alia: forest fires, criteria and indicators for SFM, certification, forest and climate change issues, statistics, definitions, illegal logging, and reduced impact logging.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates ascertained the quorum, adopted the provisional agenda (ITTC(XXXII)/1) and organization of work, heard a report on membership of the ITTC, approved the distribution of votes for 2002 (ITTC(XXXII)/1), and adopted a program of work for 2002 (ITTC(XXXII)/Info.3).

INFORMAL ADVISORY GROUP REPORT: Chair Blaser introduced the report of the Tenth Meeting of the Informal Advisory Group (ITTC(XXXII)/2), and noted that a number of items in the report, including certification, enhancing cooperation with civil society, the draft Guidelines on Restoration, Management and Rehabilitation of Degraded and Secondary Forests, preparatory work for a new agreement and possible long-term strategic plan, ITTO’s contribution to the WSSD, and the Congo Basin Initiative would be discussed further on Tuesday and Thursday.

CERTIFICATION: Markku Simula, Finland, outlined the findings of an overview paper on certification and the April 2002 ITTO International Workshop on Comparability and Equivalence of Forest Certification Schemes. The workshop concluded, inter alia, that: there are several areas of collaboration related to, inter alia: forest fires, criteria and indicators for SFM, certification, forest and climate change issues, statistics, definitions, illegal logging, and reduced impact logging.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As ITTC-32 got underway, delegates noted with satisfaction the high attendance at the opening session. Delegates highlighted the appointment of a new committed Executive Director, the increasingly prominent role of the ITTO through its involvement in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests as a focal point for trade, and the ITTC’s recent decision on combating illegal logging and trade as indicators that the ITTO may be becoming an increasingly key player in the international forest arena. Although controversy in forthcoming discussions on certification is anticipated, delegates expressed hope that the ITTO’s current momentum could help to bridge the divergence of views on this divisive issue.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

COMMITTEE SESSIONS: The CRF will meet in the Nusantara Room from 8:00-9:30 am and 5:30-7:00 pm. The Committee on Finance and Administration will meet from 8:00-9:30 am, and the Committee on Economic Information and Market Intelligence from 5:30-7:00 pm, in Jakarta Room B.

ANNUAL MARKET DISCUSSION: The Discussion will take place from 9:30 am-12:30 pm in the Nusantara Room.

ITTC SESSION: The Council will meet from 2:30-5:30 pm in the Nusantara Room to consider CITES listing proposals by member states, the Mangrove Conservation Programme, certification, the ITTO long-term strategic plan, a progress report on the implementation of the ITTO Work Programme for 2002, and the draft Annual Report for 2001.