

## Summary of the Sixty-first Session of the International Tropical Timber Council: 27-31 October 2025

The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) stands at a crossroads, as the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) is set to expire in 2029. Tropical forests provide vital environmental services and support the livelihoods of millions of people in tropical countries. However, unsustainable production and consumption of tropical timber risk driving deforestation and ecosystem loss. At the 61st session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-61), Members reaffirmed the key role of the ITTO in promoting sustainable forest management (SFM) and emphasized the need to demonstrate its continued relevance and long-term sustainability. They also looked ahead to secure the future of the ITTA by considering the roadmap for negotiations and the key elements of a successor agreement.

The Council agreed that the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for negotiating the ITTA should be held in person in conjunction with ITTC-62, which is expected to take place in November 2026 in Yokohama, Japan. The Council also extended the mandate of the Preparatory Working Group for nine months until ITTC-62, requesting it to work in close collaboration with the Secretariat to finalize identification of elements to consider for the ITTA negotiations.

Members began substantive discussions on the possible elements of a new ITTA, focusing on its scope and membership structure. On scope, they considered options such as expanding the agreement to cover non-timber forest products and ecosystem services, among other areas. They also discussed possible revisions to the current two-tier membership structure comprising Producers and Consumers. Several Members noted that membership structure is tied to assessed contributions and voting allocations, and called for careful consideration of potential changes and their impacts.

Financing was also a central topic of discussion at ITTC-61. Executive Director Sheam Satkuru provided a progress report on the implementation of ITTO's new financing architecture. She reported that the programmatic approach has raised USD 17 million since 2019, but 30 projects remain unfunded. Members expressed concern that ongoing financial constraints could hinder project development and, in turn, affect countries' engagement in the ITTO. They urged Consumer countries to support forest nations' project proposals and increase financial contributions for SFM efforts.

The Council adopted four decisions, including endorsement of nine approved projects and pre-projects under the 2025 project cycle

and authorization of financing for the immediate implementation of 20 projects, pre-projects, and activities.

ITTC-61 was held in conjunction with the sessions of the associated committees on: Economics, Statistics and Markets;

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Reforestation and Forest Management; Forest Industry; and Finance and Administration. The meetings took place in Panama City, Panama from 27-31 October 2025. In attendance were 60 delegates from 40 member governments and the EU, and approximately 24 observers and authorized invitees from intergovernmental organizations, technical agencies, certification bodies, civil society, and the private sector.

### **A Brief History of the ITTO**

The ITTO was established in 1986 to address the importance of tropical timber and related trade to producer countries, as well as concerns about the sustainable management of the world's tropical forests. While it was negotiated as a commodity agreement to promote the expansion and diversification of international trade and the improvement of structural conditions in the tropical timber market, it differed from other commodity agreements by focusing on both the utilization and conservation of tropical forests. Today, the ITTO also works to address related challenges which impinge upon these dual goals, particularly climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation.

The ITTO is headquartered in Yokohama, Japan, and currently has 76 Members, divided into two caucuses: 37 countries in the Producer caucus and 38 countries, plus the EU, in the Consumer caucus. ITTO's membership represents about 90% of the world trade in tropical timber and 80% of the world's tropical forests.

**ITTA, 1983:** The ITTO originated under the ITTA, which was negotiated under the auspices of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The ITTA was adopted in November 1983 and entered into force in April 1985.

The ITTA was established with a "sunset clause" to remain in force for five years with the possibility of extension. It was extended twice for three-year periods. Since then, it has been renegotiated on two occasions.

ITTA, 1994 was the first successor agreement. It was negotiated between 1992 and 1994, adopted in January 1994, and entered into force on 1 January 1997. The ITTA, 1994 contained broader provisions for information sharing, including non-tropical timber trade data. It also allowed for consideration of non-tropical timber issues as they relate to tropical timber, and included the ITTO Objective 2000 for achieving exports of tropical timber and timber products from sustainably managed sources by the year 2000.

ITTA, 2006, which is still in force, was the second successor agreement to the original ITTA. It focuses on expanding and diversifying world trade in tropical timber and the sustainable management of the resource base. The ITTA, 2006 entered into force on 7 December 2011, for a period of ten years. It was subsequently extended to 2026, and then to December 2029.

**The Governing Body—ITTC:** The ITTC is the ITTO's governing body. It includes all Members and meets annually. Annual contributions and votes are distributed equally between the Producer and Consumer caucuses. Members in arrears are not permitted to vote or to submit project proposals.

The Council is supported by four committees. These committees, which are open to all Members and provide advice and assistance to the Council, cover the following areas: Economics, Statistics and Markets (CEM); Forest Industry (CFI); Reforestation and Forest Management (CRF); and Finance and Administration (CFA).

The Council is also assisted by the Informal Advisory Group (IAG), which meets just prior to Council sessions to produce recommendations for draft decisions that the ITTC may wish to

consider. There is also a Trade Advisory Group (TAG), a Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG), and an Expert Panel for the Technical Appraisal of Project Proposals.

**Recent Events:** In the 21st century, the ITTO has experienced some difficulties. First, the negotiations that resulted in the ITTA, 2006 included a dispute over the project approval and funding cycle that was not resolved. After an unprecedented level of regional wrangling over selection of a new Executive Director in 2007, the same issue arose again in 2014, and was finally resolved in 2016. The dispute was due in no small part to the discovery of a financial impairment in 2015, entailing a loss of USD 18 million of ITTO funds through two failed investments. Resolution of these issues took considerable time and energy. The COVID-19 pandemic followed close on the heels of these efforts to rebuild confidence in the organization and resulted in a substantial lack of progress in the ITTO's work. Producer countries were particularly affected, as both financing and countries' ability to pursue on-the-ground work were substantially reduced.

The ITTO's ongoing recovery has involved developing a new financing architecture, attempting to secure new sources of funding, and streamlining pathways to project approval that build on the programmatic approach as it has evolved from the Thematic Programs introduced in the ITTA, 2006. There has also been considerable work on policies for, and engagement with, key stakeholders, including women and youth.

The issue of extending the ITTA, 2006 also became a major focus in 2023, as the 2026 expiration date began to loom. In a Council decision adopted virtually on 24 May 2024, the ITTA, 2006 was extended until 6 December 2029. At ITTC-60 in December 2024, the Council extended the mandate of the Preparatory Working Group (PWG) preparing for the negotiation of the successor agreement until ITTC-61, asking it to work with the Secretariat and consultants to finalize the identification of elements to be considered in the future negotiations. ITTC-60 also extended the term of Executive Director Sheam Satkuru until 31 January 2028 to ensure organizational continuity during the ramp-up of the negotiations.

### **ITTC-61 Report**

ITTO Director of Operations Gerhard Breulmann opened ITTC-61 on Monday, 27 October 2025. Welcoming delegates to Panama and thanking Panama's Ministry of Environment for its preparations, ITTC-61 Chair Carlos Espinosa Peña (Panama) highlighted the importance of this session as an opportunity to analyze the ITTA and explore options to broaden its mandate. He stressed the value of the ITTO in mobilizing finance to promote the sustainability of the market for tropical forest products, inviting producing and consuming countries to renew their cooperation.

Sheam Satkuru, ITTO Executive Director, thanked the Government of Panama as well as Members who have made their assessed contributions. She stressed that forest management contributes to meeting objectives related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Jorge Mario Rodríguez Zúñiga, Vice-Minister of the Environment, Costa Rica, noted the role of the ITTO in translating environmental commitments to tangible results related to public policy, national forest inventories, value addition, and production of certified timber. He supported engaging Indigenous Peoples and

local communities in order to achieve socially fair and viable trade in tropical timber.

Roberto Hernán Seminario Portocarrero, Ambassador of Peru to Japan, praised ITTO's collective efforts in forest conservation, sustainable production, and capacity building. He noted Peru's implementation of over 60 ITTO-funded projects and reaffirmed Peru's commitment to the Organization.

Hendra Halim, Ambassador of Indonesia to Panama, underscored ITTO's crucial role in sustainable tropical forests and bringing social benefits. Emphasizing the need for global cooperation, he recognized the ITTO as a platform for collaboration, synergy, and creativity among countries.

Juan Carlos Navarro, Minister of the Environment, Panama, emphasized the global tropical forest crisis and urged joint action, stressing that the ITTO is irreplaceable. He noted forests' vital role in climate mitigation, biodiversity, and livelihoods, highlighting Panama's carbon-negative status and protection of 35% of its land and 54% of its waters.

### Organizational Matters

**Ascertainment of the Quorum:** On Monday, the Secretariat reported 32 Consumers either present or having delegated their votes to another Consumer member, thus achieving quorum. He reported 14 Producers present, comprising 474 votes, short of the 19 Members and 667 votes needed for quorum. He informed the Council that the Secretariat will continue its outreach during the week to ask Members not present at ITTC-61 to likewise submit their credentials and delegate their votes.

On Wednesday afternoon, the Secretariat announced the achievement of quorum, with 33 Consumers present, comprising 788 votes, and 22 Producers, comprising 697 votes.

**Agenda and Organization of Work:** Delegates adopted the agenda ([ITTC\(LXI\)/1](#)).

**Report on Council Membership:** Executive Director Satkuru reported no change in membership since ITTC-60.

**Proposed Distribution of Votes in the 2026-27 Biennium:** There was no comment on this agenda item.

**Admission of Observers:** The Executive Director reported that two late applications for new observers were received after the compilation of the results of the initial review of applications of Observers to ITTC-61 ([ITTC\(LXI\)/Info. 4](#)). The Council admitted both prospective observers, as recommended by the Secretariat.

**Executive Director's Statement:** On Monday afternoon, Satkuru discussed some of the ITTO's challenges and opportunities. She noted that despite their vital importance, tropical forests are often undervalued and described efforts to identify additional opportunities for the ITTO. Recalling the ITTO is now accredited to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Satkuru reported ongoing work on a funding proposal for submission to the GCF. She also urged Members that receive project funding from the GCF or Global Environment Facility (GEF) to include the ITTO as a technical expert for project implementation.

**Report of the IAG:** On Monday afternoon, Chair Espinosa Peña presented the IAG's report ([ITTC\(LXI\)/2](#)), which includes draft decisions on:

- the Administrative Budget for the 2026 and 2027 Financial Biennium;
- the Biennial Work Programme for 2026–2027; and
- matters pertaining to Article 44 of ITTA, 2006 on renewal of the ITTA.

**Report of the Credentials Committee:** On Wednesday afternoon, Credentials Committee Chair Adam Mohd Nazri (Malaysia) reported the acceptance of the credentials of 26 countries and the EU attending ITTC-61, and the review of the representation of 31 countries that had delegated their interests and voting rights (ITTC(LXI)/3). He encouraged Members who have not yet submitted their credentials to provide them to the Secretariat.

### Matters Related to Article 19 of the ITTA, 2006 on the Administrative Account – Decisions 3(LVII) and 3(LVIII)

On Monday, Executive Director Sheam Satkuru reported that the Secretariat is considering how to help Members in arrears overcome payment issues, with discussions being held on this with three Members. She noted that several Members who used to make regular contributions are encountering difficulties, and that the Secretariat has proposed three possible payment plans to Members, but no resolutions have been made to date.

### Matters Pertaining to Article 44 of the ITTA, 2006 – Decisions 4(LVII), 4(LVIII), and 4(LX)

On Monday, PWG Chair Vaneska Bethancourt (Panama) presented the work of the PWG (ITTC(LXI)/4). She highlighted three virtual PWG meetings and four regional consultations over the past year, as well as supporting papers on: an analysis of eight international commodity bodies; and how the ITTO fits into the global institutional goals for tropical forests. The PWG proposed extending its mandate for nine months until the first Preparatory Committee meeting. She described key elements for negotiation related to the scope of the ITTA, membership, and voting structures. The report proposes a successor agreement with an open-ended duration, with periodic reviews. It suggests considering a broader mandate that includes non-wood forest products and environmental services like biodiversity and carbon credits. She urged delegates to read the discussion papers and engage fully.

The PRODUCER CAUCUS noted low participation in regional consultations and announced they have appointed chairs to lead the regional coordination, with India for Asia Pacific, and Panama for Latin America.

On Wednesday, Executive Director Satkuru outlined a Secretariat proposal to hold the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee in conjunction with ITTC-62. This option was further considered by Members on Thursday. The PRODUCER and CONSUMER CAUCUSES expressed their support for this option.

Regarding the revised roadmap contained in the PWG report, the PRODUCER CAUCUS highlighted continuing internal consultations.

Members also discussed the possible content of a new agreement. PRODUCERS reported agreement that the scope should extend beyond timber, but no consensus yet on the exact boundaries. CANADA emphasized that, while expanding the ITTA's scope to include non-wood products merits discussion, the next agreement should avoid incorporating financial instruments that could divert attention from trade in tropical timber products or duplicate work under other processes.

PANAMA opposed expanding the ITTA mandate to include ecosystem services, cautioning against duplication with other processes such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and instead called for strengthening the ITTO to enhance synergies.

Several Members, including the EU and JAPAN, expressed caution about broadening the scope, noting that it could increase

overlaps and complicate negotiations. NEW ZEALAND expressed conditional support for expansion, depending on agreement on how the broader scope would be defined.

Members also discussed the ITTA's membership structure. CANADA stressed that the context has changed since the Agreement's inception, noting that some countries are now both timber producers and consumers. PANAMA pointed out that it is both a producer and a consumer, importing three times as much wood products as it produces.

Several Members highlighted that membership structure is tied to assessed contributions and voting allocations, and called for careful consideration of potential changes and their impacts. CANADA recalled a previous proposal to decouple membership structure from these elements, but the Executive Director noted that the PWG had reached consensus against such delinking.

### ***ITTO Biennial Work Programme***

**Progress Report on the Implementation of the Biennial Work Programme (BWP) 2024-2025:** On Wednesday afternoon, the Secretariat presented the status report ([ITTC\(LXI\)/5](#)), noting the BWP contained 37 activities, including 21 that required financing and 16 administrative and financial activities that did not require financing. He reported that out of the 21 activities requiring financing, four activities have received full funding, one activity is pending finance and the remaining 16 have received partial funding, including from the core budget.

Vice Chair Cassandra Price (Australia) reported on the ITTO Fellowship Programme 2024-2025 ([ITTC\(LXI\)/6](#)), noting a total of 90 applications received and 20 applications shortlisted by the Secretariat, of which 10 are female and 10 are male. She recommended that the Council should award the 20 fellowships with a total budget of USD 136,760.

In the ensuing discussions, various Members expressed gratitude for the Secretariat's work, with CANADA highlighting the importance of improving data collection and data-driven policies, and INDONESIA emphasizing the need to integrate a new financial architecture. AUSTRALIA cited voluntary contributions as key to supporting capacity-building and international collaboration, urging Members to provide such contributions. NEW ZEALAND underlined the importance of technology and expressed appreciation for the collaboration of the ITTO with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), noting that SFM is key to biodiversity conservation. BRAZIL praised the fellowship programme and the number of women receiving awards.

**Draft BWP 2026-2027:** The Secretariat presented the draft BWP ([ITTC\(LXI\)/7](#)), which contains proposed activities for 2026-2027. He stated that the programme contains 21 activities that require funding through voluntary contributions or are approved under core operational costs. He also noted 16 recurring work, financial and administrative activities that have no financial requirements. The Secretariat reported that the new funding sought under this BWP is: USD 2 million from the core budget and USD 2.6 million in voluntary contributions, with a total funding of USD 4.6 million.

### ***Matters Related to Article 15 of the ITTA, 2006 on Cooperation and Coordination with other Organizations***

On Wednesday, Executive Director Satkuru reported on ITTO's ongoing collaboration efforts with other organizations ([ITTC\(LXI\)/8](#)). Regarding the GEF, she noted that while ITTO has pursued collaboration over the past four years, the GEF currently has 18 implementing agencies and is not considering additional ones. As

a result, she explained that the ITTO is focusing on being included in existing GEF projects rather than seeking direct implementing agency status.

Satkuru further reported that ITTO has signed memoranda of understanding with the United Nations University and with the Remote Sensing Technology Center of Japan. Recalling ITTO's accreditation to the GCF in March 2024, she highlighted progress in developing a proposal for submission to the Fund. She further highlighted ongoing engagement with TAG and CSAG, and discussions with Japan-based agencies.

On private sector engagement, Satkuru noted that ITTO had hosted events to raise its profile among actors in Japan's private sector and to explore potential partnerships.

COLOMBIA, supported by CANADA and the EU, proposed that the Secretariat prepare a one-page document outlining ITTO's role and value to facilitate communication with decision makers. COLOMBIA also suggested exploring partnerships with philanthropic organizations. JAPAN urged Council Members to liaise with their New York counterparts to advance ITTO's application for UN General Assembly observer status.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) highlighted collaboration with ITTO to champion wood-based climate solutions. She welcomed joint planning, implementation and mobilization of resources, including on data and monitoring. The Common Fund for Commodities described a new collaboration with ITTO to develop a blended finance project focused on sustainable value chains in the Congo Basin.

### ***Special Account and Bali Partnership Fund***

**Pledges to the Special Account and the Bali Partnership Fund (BPF):** On Thursday, Chair Espinosa opened the floor for pledges to the Special Account. JAPAN announced a pledge of USD 715,408 to implement specified projects and activities. AUSTRALIA highlighted its USD 43,982 voluntary contribution made earlier in 2025, and CANADA noted its financial support for fire prevention and management in tropical timber-producing forests, as well as capacity building for improved data collection.

**Report of the Panel on Sub-Account B of the BPF:** On Friday, ITTC-61 Vice Chair Cassandra Price reported the balances in BPF Sub-Account B and the Unearmarked Fund totaled USD 137,888.50. She confirmed the Panel's recommendation to allocate the total funds to the Fellowship Programme.

The recommendation was adopted without comment.

### ***Implementation of ITTO's New Financing Architecture, Phase II***

On Wednesday, Executive Director Satkuru provided a progress report on the implementation of ITTO's new financing architecture ([ITTC\(LXI\)/10](#)). She noted ongoing engagement with other bodies, such as the FAO, UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and potential collaboration with new partners. She reported that since 2020, 61 concept notes have been submitted, of which 39 have been published for donor consideration and 15 have received donor interest, with 12 additional submissions since ITTC-60. She said the programmatic approach has raised a total of USD 17 million since 2019, but 30 projects remain unfunded. She also cautioned that concept notes will sunset in the coming years.

The EU underscored the need to find solutions to the financing architecture. BENIN raised concerns about the number of project concept notes that are due to sunset soon. The Secretariat clarified

that countries may resubmit projects before or after they sunset. BRAZIL noted that limited funding discourages countries from submitting proposals, despite good intentions. PANAMA called on consumer countries to actively support forest nations' proposals and to provide more funding for conservation efforts, urging "all of us to be partners in this organization." COLOMBIA suggested exploring alternative mechanisms to access climate funds, particularly through smaller implementing agencies that could more effectively facilitate fund distribution.

Executive Director Satkuru raised concerns about the efficiency of the actual financial model, saying that donor countries have competing efforts and are increasingly directing development funds bilaterally rather than through multilateral organizations like ITTO, thereby creating financial challenges beyond the organization's control. She highlighted that, in response, ITTO has adapted its financing architecture to facilitate partnerships with other organizations while simplifying processes to attract donors. She urged member countries to support innovative solutions and co-funding mechanisms to ensure the organization's ability to continue to implement projects effectively.

### ***Joint Session of the Committees***

The Committees met in a joint session on Tuesday and Wednesday to consider shared agenda items and discuss trade and market issues.

**CSAG Panel Discussion:** On Tuesday, Evelyn González, CSAG Chairperson, moderated a panel on "Advancing Sustainable Tropical Forest Management: Integrating Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihoods under the ITTA and Global Biodiversity Framework."

Fernanda Rodrigues, UNFF Women's Major Group, presented on the role of forests in the Global Biodiversity Agenda and opportunities for alignment of biodiversity and forest priorities. Noting upcoming deadlines for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, she described challenges related to national-level implementation, financing, and GBF monitoring indicators. She highlighted opportunities to unify national indicators across biodiversity and forest management frameworks and underscored the importance of broad stakeholder inclusion within the context of shrinking democratic spaces.

On implications of international timber trade for biodiversity goals, Karen Noboa, TRAFFIC, stressed that sustainable trade should be a means to achieve healthy forests and drive resilient communities. Highlighting tools and products that have been utilized in partnership with TRAFFIC, she described successes related to: improved certification and traceability tools; investment in community-based forest management models and benefit sharing; and technology related to remote sensing, traceability and risk analysis. Her recommendations focused on: strengthening governance and law enforcement; improving data integration through cross border intelligence sharing; and reducing consumer demand for illegal and unsustainable products.

Rose Pélégie Masso, African Women's Network for Community Forest Management (REFACOF), described forest restoration impacts from ITTO partnerships in Togo and Benin, as well as work in Cameroon, based on approaches that strengthen women's land tenure, livelihood security, access to finance and decision-making powers. While noting continued challenges related to negative climate impacts, access to finance, and social barriers to women's empowerment, she stressed that gender-responsive tools exist to achieve positive gender, SFM and biodiversity impacts.

Christine Wulandari, Forum Komunikasi Kehutanan Masyarakat (FKKM), Indonesia, shared Indonesia's model of community-based landscape approaches to biodiversity and livelihoods. She highlighted the importance of forest management in ensuring sustainable production, strengthening local institutions, and supporting adaptation and climate mitigation. She shared three case studies from Indonesia, noting their potential to be synergized into a landscape-based approach that would be more beneficial for the community and support environmental biodiversity and sustainability. She also highlighted challenges, especially regarding the disparities between men and women in land ownership and resource administration.

Ramón Chiari, Ministry of Environment, Panama, described his country's legal framework that enables Indigenous communities to manage their own forest resources sustainably and to conserve and improve their livelihoods. He said more than 60% of Panama's territory is forested, and SFM is concentrated in Indigenous territories. He highlighted benefits and achievements of community forest management, including improvements in people's lives and basic community conditions, reforestation, and freshwater conservation. He also identified challenges such as ensuring compliance with management plans to ensure they are completed and that benefits are distributed equitably.

In the ensuing discussion, COSTA RICA emphasized the vital role of women in forest's well-being and health, noting that their efforts and work are still "invisible" and they face various challenges, such as access to financing, information, and formalization. He described Costa Rica's example of "a gender inclusion award for productive units," which supports rural women in overcoming challenges related to informality, credit, and market access, among others.

CONGO asked for information about certification, praised REFACOF as a good initiative, and highlighted the need to share information among communities and help secure women's land rights.

Fernanda Rodrigues explained how local communities can access and obtain certification, noting that some certification bodies have funds available for local communities, and Pélégie Masso noted that each REFACOF country has a regional focal point.

The EU underscored the interlinkages among ITTO, the CBD, and the GBF, urging Members to engage in these processes.

NEW ZEALAND and PANAMA underlined the vital link between sustainable trade, SFM, and biodiversity conservation and urged Members to streamline their work on these issues.

Rodrigues read the CSAG Statement, reaffirming that sustainable tropical timber trade is indispensable, but only if intrinsically tied to the health of natural forests, the rights and security of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including women and youth, and transparent governance. Rodrigues said the CSAG also underlines the importance of ensuring transparent and credible markets, and called for public disclosure of key project and concession data, and the creation of a joint CSAG-TAG mechanism to address deforestation-free supply chains.

Executive Director Satkuru thanked Members for their insights and assured them the ITTO is working closely with the CBD Secretariat, highlighting that a draft memorandum of understanding has been sent to the CBD Secretariat to deepen cooperation.

**Policy Work under the CRF: *Monitoring Process in Application of Criteria and Indicators for SFM:*** The Secretariat reported on progress under this item, noting that a training workshop

was held in Trinidad and Tobago. He emphasized the need for additional funds to organize two more regional workshops in Africa, one for French-speaking countries and another for English-speaking countries. He stressed the importance of continued training to maintain momentum in the proper use of criteria and indicators.

**Revision of the ITTO Guidelines on Fire Management in Tropical Forests (presentation of the Tropical Integrated Fire Management Toolkit prototype):** The Secretariat recalled the decision not to revise the Guidelines or duplicate the extensive information already available, but instead to develop a centralized online platform dedicated to integrated fire management in tropical forests. She introduced the Tropical Integrated Fire Management Toolkit, a clearinghouse of curated resources on tropical fire management based on the 5R framework: review and analysis, risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery. She demonstrated the prototype and noted that the Toolkit is expected to launch in the second quarter of 2026. She thanked the US, Japan, and Canada for their financial support so far and called for additional resources to continue the work.

The Secretariat also highlighted that the ITTO is leading the initiative “Integrated fire management in tropical forests” in collaboration with FAO, UNFF, the Center for People and Forests, and the Global Fire Monitoring Center. She also noted Brazil’s proposal to launch a call to action on integrated fire management at the Belém Climate Change Conference in November 2025.

COLOMBIA appreciated the ongoing work and said the expected call to action will help strengthen the ITTO’s efforts. CANADA asked what upkeep and maintenance would be required for the Toolkit and highlighted the potential role of artificial intelligence. He said the Toolkit should also include Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge.

Responding to these and other comments, the Secretariat acknowledged the usefulness of artificial intelligence and the need to include Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge. The Secretariat also emphasized the need for funds to maintain the Toolkit, but noted that it will not rely solely on ITTO and its Members, as the platform will include an option for contributions from the wider fire management community.

**Dissemination of the ITTO Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics:** The Secretariat reported on implementation of this item, including through in-person workshops in Africa.

**Support for Women’s Groups with Gender Empowerment and Forest Landscape Restoration in Togo:** The Secretariat presented on achievements in advancing women’s empowerment and restoration in Togo.

**Joint ITTO-CBD Collaborative Initiative for Tropical Forest Biodiversity:** The Secretariat outlined the contributions of ITTO to CBD goals, such as participating in the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative. She said the ITTO and CBD Secretariats had collaborated to renew their cooperative memorandum of understanding, which raised visibility but unfortunately has not mobilized new financing. NEW ZEALAND and the EU expressed appreciation for these efforts.

**Cooperation and Consultation with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, UNFF and others:** The Secretariat described continuing cooperation with the Collaborative

Partnership on Forests, UNFF and others, including the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization.

**Collaboration on Criteria and Indicators on SFM:** The Secretariat also underscored engagements over the past year on criteria and indicators on SFM, including through the collaborative forest resource questionnaire and work to further refine the definition of forest degradation.

**Policy Work under the CEM: Legality Frameworks:** On Tuesday, the Secretariat described updates to international legal frameworks related to market access from 2024 to 2025. The Secretariat noted that the entry into force of the EU’s Regulation on Deforestation-free Products (EUDR) was postponed in September 2025 for another year. Regarding the Australian Illegal Logging Prohibition Act, he reported updates in 2025, with new regulations taking effect that primarily change the due diligence requirements for importers and processors of timber and timber products.

Regarding the Japan Clean Wood Act, he mentioned its last amendment came into force on 1 April 2025. Regarding the Korean revised Sustainable Use of Timber Act, he noted an enforcement decree issued on 11 March 2025. He highlighted Ghana’s licensing system under the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade system, indicating that Ghana is the first African country, and the second globally, to issue these licenses for timber exports. Regarding CITES, he reported that over 800 tree species are listed in its Appendices I, II, and III.

In the ensuing discussion, MALAYSIA and INDONESIA shared national examples of implementing traceability systems and updating regulations.

Responding to comments about the forthcoming 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, the Secretariat outlined some of the propositions by Members, such as Brazil’s call to move *Paubrasilia* from Appendix II to I, and said the ITTO has sent its comments to CITES.

**Certification, Traceability, and Transparency:** On certification, traceability, and transparency, the Secretariat reported that the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) remain the main schemes being implemented in ITTO Producer countries, with PEFC being the largest certification scheme in the world. He described the relative contributions of certification systems under the FSC and the PEFC, and highlighted the producing countries most heavily represented under each system.

In the ensuing discussion, MALAYSIA, AUSTRALIA, PANAMA, COLOMBIA, and INDIA shared their efforts in certification and traceability, and how they are ensuring timber legality and sustainability in their production.

**Expert Group on Illegal Logging and Associated Trade (EGILAT) and ITTO Collaboration:** The Secretariat reported on ITTO’s participation in the 27th plenary meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC-EGILAT), held in February 2025, and the 28th APEC-EGILAT meeting in July 2025, both hosted by the Republic of Korea, where the ITTO provided updates on efforts to support the use of sustainably-produced tropical timber.

**Policy Work Under the CFI: Promotion of Sustainable Wood Use in Domestic Markets:** The Secretariat reported that projects in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have been declared as complete, while there are two ongoing projects in Malaysia and India.

Presenting on their completed project, INDONESIA outlined successes, including: enriching the assortment of wood projects available in the domestic market; developing a mid-term

national strategy for wood products in the domestic market; and implementing public education measures to engage the younger generation and the general public as potential consumers of wood products.

MALAYSIA presented on its completed project, highlighting achievements such as organizing a sustainable wood furniture design competition that successfully engaged students nationwide and that fostered creativity and innovation.

THAILAND spoke about its completed project, describing policy improvements, engagement with youth designers and investments in networks to increase the capacity of smallholders and private sector stakeholders, reaching 150 brands and 40 producer associations. He underscored the need to work on urban demand. He also described a project on forest surveillance along the border of Thailand and Myanmar, which addresses the impacts of displaced households on deforestation.

JAPAN, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, and CANADA welcomed the sharing of lessons and CANADA highlighted opportunities to link learnings with the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership and with the UNFCCC process.

**Annual Market Discussion:** TAG Co-Chairs Ashley Amidon and Ivan Tomaselli moderated this session on the theme, "The Timber Industry Reimagined: Lessons from Market Struggles and Sustainability Efforts."

Emily Fripp, Efeca (UK), reflected on the status of forests, the timber trade, and the future of trade in sustainable tropical timber products. She mentioned trends and challenges faced by the forestry industry, such as the constantly changing geopolitical context and the global need for traceability and transparency, citing the EU deforestation and timber regulations as examples of how the market will need to adapt. She highlighted the growing importance of community forestry, agroforestry systems, and smallholder producers, and noted that market changes also bring new opportunities, such as new ways of financing, thus generating more value.

João Baldasso, CIPEM (Brazil), spoke about the important role of forest plantations in Latin America, especially in Brazil, and their contributions to ensuring a sustainable and competitive global timber supply. He noted the potential of the Amazon for biodiversity conservation, job creation, and economic growth. He highlighted that Brazil's Forest Code requires private landowners in the Amazon region to maintain 80% of their property as a "Legal Reserve" of native vegetation, totaling 160 million hectares that cannot be exploited. Baldasso provided some recommendations, including the need for:

- energy integration, integrating plantations with agro-industrial demand;
- legality and certification, strengthening traceability;
- financing models, including by mobilizing green finance and facilitating models for small producers; and
- investing in innovation.

Jaime Sotela Montero, Cámara Forestal Madera e Industria de Costa Rica, presented on the future of the tropical timber industry in Costa Rica. He outlined that the country's system of payments for environmental services brought an end to deforestation. He clarified that this system incentivizes timber plantations but not as a replacement for natural forests, stressing the need for symbiosis between forests and plantations.

Sotela Montero also highlighted that the country is developing a national civil code for wood construction and a climate change code

for the construction sector to improve the industry's sustainability. He further stressed the importance of increasing domestic consumption of timber to strengthen host rural economies.

Ngo Sy Hoai, Vietnam Timber and Forest Products Association, described his country's journey from severe deforestation to becoming a leading exporter of wood products. He highlighted lessons learned, including simultaneous reforms of the forestry sector and wood industry, and the development of a timber certification scheme to help penetrate high-end markets. Noting that over 50% of exports are to the US, he lamented the significant impact of the US reciprocal tariff on his country's wood industry.

Providing a case study of the African tropical forest industry, Tullia Baldassarri, Interholco, described the dynamics of managing a concession in the Republic of the Congo to produce high quality and high value timber. She stressed commitments to workers' rights and approaches to building trust and confidence with communities.

In the ensuing discussion, speakers stressed the need to ensure that food security and basic needs are met before communities can invest in forest protection and production. Baldassarri described Interholco's approaches to free, prior and informed consent, as well as company grievance mechanisms.

MALAYSIA asked about carbon credits and speakers broadly agreed these can be an additional income source and complement sustainable forest use. CHINA invited collaboration with Viet Nam over shared interests, and encouraged partnerships that increase market access for small- and medium-sized companies. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA underscored the need for increased trade data sharing, and described its investments in DNA-based traceability tools to support legal timber trade. The EU provided background on the EUDR and noted that it is working on simplifying the implementation framework and ensuring a smooth functioning information technology system. The EU noted that biodiversity credits may also be used to finance SFM.

TAG Co-Chair Amidon delivered the TAG statement, stressing TAG's four key areas of concerns:

- trade policies that increase volatility and limit market access, including recent tariffs;
- recent developments under CITES that resulted in an increase in listed species but without additional investment in management or scientific support;
- lack of clarity on EUDR compliance pathways for small and medium enterprises and potential uneven rollout among member states; and
- negative consumer attitudes toward tropical timber.

Amidon said TAG:

- notes that if timber trade is constrained, the risk of forest conversion to agriculture will increase;
- underscores that good trade policy will lead to long-term forest protection;
- calls for an update to the ITTO's 2004 Trade Barriers Study; and
- recommends that future CITES proposals to list timber species should be brought before the ITTC for discussion.

**Other Business:** Nils Perez Ocupa, La Selva Corp (Peru), presented the project "Fondo Los Cedros," which began 17 years ago, when mahogany was introduced to the Peruvian coast. He said this project demonstrated that a species can be transferred to another system and survive. He shared the challenges the plantation has faced and noted that it has been developing very well through crop associations and is also helping finance the farming community. He noted that its inclusion as an ITTO project in 2024 enabled it to be

verified and published, and pointed to opportunities for large-scale replication.

Eduardo Aza Santillana, Agrovision Corp (Peru), presented how the company is integrating land restoration and commercial forest plantations with large-scale agro-industrial crops, highlighting the “Sembrando Futuro” mahogany project as an example. He described the project as having a forest reserve of more than 1980 hectares, protecting 84 species of wildlife and 11 species of wild flora, and bringing jobs and transformation to local communities. He highlighted that the project creates a biological corridor that allows species to move freely, thereby improving forest conditions and reducing the need for agrochemicals and fertilizers.

**Ex-Post Evaluation Reports:** On Wednesday, Marysol Jaime-Arteaga, Consultant, presented the ex-post evaluation of the project “Capacity Building for Sustainable Management of Tropical Dry Forests in the North Coast of Peru” ([CRF\(LIX\)/4](#)). She underlined that from a management perspective, the project was an operational success, as it had achieved all its deliverables within time and budget. However, she noted the project did not lead to long-term transformation, as it could not overcome deep-seated economic and governance barriers. She explained that, for instance, for the local community, the short-term profits from the agro-industry vastly outweighed the long-term benefits of SFM. She underscored that systemic change requires programmatic, longer-term investments that allow for piloting, learning, and scaling.

Jaime-Arteaga emphasized that the project was not a failure, but was a vital learning laboratory because it laid a crucial foundation and provided a roadmap for future initiatives.

Jean Marcial Bell, Consultant, presented the ex-post evaluation of the project “Capacity Building for the implementation of Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains by stakeholders in the Congo Basin countries” ([CRF\(LIX\)/5](#)). He noted that materials were well-developed and high quality, but that dissemination was ineffective, with few of the 80 trainees recalling or applying the content three years after the training. Individuals underscored that they did not have the financial resources to implement the learnings in their roles and that they had limited ability to influence others within their offices.

Responding to questions from PANAMA and PERU, Jaime-Arteaga said project design needs to focus on realistic goals that can be institutionalized after project completion. Responding to the EU and COLOMBIA about the use of sustainability and learning, the Secretariat stressed that ITTO learnings are integrated into ITTO guidelines and that government commitment is required to mainstream activities following project completion.

**Report of the Expert Panel for the Technical Appraisal of Project Proposals:** On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented the Expert Panel’s report ([ITTC/EP-60](#)), noting that 11 projects were appraised and eight were commended with the incorporation of minor amendments. He reported that the Panel decided that the remaining three projects require essential modifications and will be returned to the proponents to revise and resubmit to the Panel for assessment.

The Secretariat further noted that the Expert Panel did not highlight major findings or recommendations. He added that although the number of project proposals dropped steadily since 2019, this year had a small increase, although the overall number remains low.

### **Committee on Finance and Administration (CFA)**

The CFA met on Monday and Wednesday. Vice-Chair Cassandra Price (Australia) served as CFA Chair, given the absence of CFA Chair Pyoabalo Alaba (Togo).

The Committee adopted the provisional agenda ([CFA\(XL\)/1](#)) without comment and agreed to the admission of observers as approved by the Council.

**Approved Biennial Administrative Budget for the Years 2026 and 2027:** On Monday, the Secretariat invited the Committee to review the Budget for 2026 and 2027 ([CFA\(XL\)/2](#)), and noted a decrease in the Basic Administrative Costs for 2026-2027 compared to the 2025 budget.

Responding to questions from JAPAN, the EU, and BRAZIL, the Secretariat explained that installation costs decreased due to the retirement of senior staff members, and special activities costs increased due to the increase in the number of regional workshops and meetings. They further highlighted options to improve cost-efficiency, such as holding virtual meetings. The Secretariat also recalled its proposal to hold the first Preparatory Committee meeting in conjunction with ITTC-62, and raised the possibility of reducing the number of meeting days for ITTC-62.

**Review of Contributions to the Administrative Budgets:** On Monday, the Secretariat presented the Statements of the Administrative Account ([CFA\(XL\)/3](#)). He reported that the assessed contributions of Producers to the 2025 Administrative Budget totaled USD 3,280,248, of which USD 1,053,999.08 has been paid, while those of Consumers were USD 3,881,391.47, of which USD 3,492,193.47 has been paid. He added that Producers’ cumulative outstanding assessed contributions now total USD 12,021,332.43, while those of Consumers total USD 867,249.

Responding to Members’ comments and questions, the Secretariat highlighted efforts to provide workable payment plans to Members in arrears, but noted a lack of response from such Members. The Secretariat also identified challenges arising from some countries not perceiving tangible benefits from ITTO membership.

**Current Status of the Administrative Account for Financial Year 2025:** On Monday, the Secretariat presented the Status of the Administrative Account for 2025 ([CFA\(XL\)/4](#)). He reported that arrears payments of USD 672,476 have been received this year, but that total arrears as of September 2025 were about USD 14.5 million.

The EU expressed concern about the long-term effects of the ongoing arrears and urged ensuring that the working capital is maintained at a sustainable level. He asked if the arrears will be carried forward when a new ITTA is adopted. The Secretariat expressed hope that Members in arrears would resume their regular payments and noted that the upcoming ITTA negotiations in 2027 may encourage Members in arrears to resume their payments. Regarding carrying forward of arrears, she said this is still to be decided by the Council.

**Resources of the Special Account and the Bali Partnership Fund:** On Monday, the Secretariat presented the report ([CFA\(XL\)/5](#)) showing a balance of funds under the Special Account and Bali Partnership Fund of USD 15,041,917, of which USD 10,172,493 were funds earmarked for specific projects and activities. The Committee took note of the document.

**Auditor’s Report for the Financial Year 2024:** The Secretariat presented the Financial Reports ([CFA\(XL\)/6](#)), Management Letter prepared by the independent auditors for ITTO management

(CFA(XL)/CRP□1), and Internal Audit Report (CFA(XL)/CRP□2). The Committee accepted the Auditor's Report.

#### **Extension of the Tenure of a Senior Management Staff**

**Member:** Executive Director Satkuru introduced this item, explaining that the Director of Operations will reach retirement age in July 2026. She proposed extending his tenure for 12 months, as permitted under the ITTO Staff Regulations and Rules. The Committee agreed to make this recommendation to the Council.

#### **Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for 2026:**

Acting Chair Cassandra Price was elected as the Chairperson for 2026. The Committee invited nominations for Vice-Chair from the Producer Caucus.

#### **Dates and Venues of the Forty-first and Forty-second Sessions:**

Chair Price noted the dates for these CFA sessions will be determined in relation to the dates for ITTC-62 and ITTC-63.

**Recommendations to the ITTC:** The Committee recommended to the Council to:

- approve the Biennial Administrative Budget for 2026 and 2027 (CFA(XL)/2 Rev.1), in the amount of USD 7,102,185 and USD 7,104,278, respectively;
- approve the Financial Reports for 2024 (CFA(XL)/6);
- take note of the list of disclosures required by the Financial Rules (CFA(XL)/4, Annex 1), endorse the list of sole providers and approve the list of banks and financial institutions; and
- approve the extension of the tenure of Gerhard Breulmann, Director of Operations, ITTO Secretariat, for 12 months beyond his current retirement age, to 31 July 2027.

**Report of the CFA Session:** On Wednesday, the CFA reviewed its draft report to the Council (CFA(XL)/7). Delegates also made small additions and requested clarifications, such as how the duration of the PWG meeting would impact the 2026/2027 Biennial Administrative Budget. The Secretariat responded that the PWG has a separate funding allocation, and the meeting duration would not affect the Administrative Budget. The Committee adopted the report.

#### **Committee on Economics, Statistics and Markets and Committee on the Forest Industry (CEM-CFI)**

The joint meeting of CEM-CFI, chaired by Kenneth R. Tabliga (Philippines) met on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Monday, delegates adopted the agenda (CEM-CFI(LIX)/1 Rev.1).

**New Project and Pre-Projects:** Chair Tabliga described the approval of a project on Experimental commercial plantations of Caoba in the northern coastal area of Peru, as well as the approval and donor funding of a concept note on a dialogue platform for cross-border Vietnamese Acacia value-chain stakeholders.

**Review of Project and Pre-projects in Progress:** The Secretariat noted that projects currently under implementation are on track in India, Peru, Malaysia, Indonesia and Costa Rica (CEM-CFI(LIX)/2 Rev.1). The REPUBLIC OF KOREA outlined its support to projects in Peru and Malaysia and requested additional monitoring indicators to allow for evaluation of market impacts. Chair Tabliga highlighted additional concept notes pending financing: in Vietnam on plantation forest information sharing and wood supply chain traceability; on timber traceability in Mexico; and on reactivation of forest production and increased wood consumption in Costa Rica.

**Report on Completed Projects:** Chair Tabliga invited updates from Members on completed projects (CEM-CFI(LIX)/3) on: promoting sustainable domestic consumption of wood products in Thailand; developing a sustainable domestic market for wood products in Indonesia; strengthening surveillance of forest loss in

Thailand; and strengthening and extending the coverage of forest monitoring and traceability in Panama. PANAMA described project impacts related to public outreach efforts, successes in integrating traceability training at multiple levels of ministry actors, and its ability to reach remote rural areas with connectivity.

**Ex-Post Evaluation:** Chair Tabliga noted that a completed project on traceability in Guatemala will be subjected to ex-post evaluation in 2026. She invited Members to suggest projects for evaluation and described selection criteria related to: project size; learning opportunities; institutional or capacity impacts; and replicability of the activity. The Secretariat proposed a project from Panama for ex-post evaluation in 2027 related to strengthening forest monitoring and extending the coverage of the traceability system.

**Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2026:** On Wednesday, the CEM-CFI elected Rata Muda (New Zealand) as Chair and a representative from Guatemala as Vice-Chair for 2026.

**Recommendations to the ITTC:** The Committees recommended that funding be made available for three projects: one under the CEM for Peru; and CFI projects in Viet Nam and Peru. Chair Tabliga noted three approved concept notes awaiting finance from Viet Nam, Mexico and Costa Rica.

**Report of the CEM-CFI Session:** On Friday, the Committee reviewed and adopted the draft report to Council (CEM-CFI(LIX)/4) following minor edits.

#### **Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management (CRF)**

The CRF, chaired by Björn Merckell (Sweden), met on Wednesday and Friday. On Wednesday, the Committee adopted the agenda (CRF(LIX)/1 Rev.1).

**Projects and Pre-projects Newly Approved by Expert Panel:** The Committee approved the seven project proposals reviewed by the Expert Panel (ITTC/EP-60):

- Ecological Restoration and Sustainable Management of the Sitatunga Valley Natural Community Park (Benin);
- Generation of Fundamental Information for the Second Cutting Cycle in the Amazon Rainforest (Brazil);
- Developing Silvicultural Management Models for Forest Restoration based on the Use of Seed Trees in the Province of Tahuamanu (Peru);
- Strengthening Governance Systems and Local Regulatory Frameworks for Resilience and Sustainability of Municipal and Community Forests (Guatemala);
- Support to Local Communities for the Restoration and Sustainable Management of Mountain Forests in the Sub-northern Region (Togo);
- Restoration and Sustainable Management of Gallery Forests in the Mono Delta Biosphere Reserve (Benin); and
- Study for the Restoration and Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in the Mô Plain (Togo).

#### **Report on Completed Projects, Pre-projects, and BWP**

**Project-based Activities:** The Committee considered the report on completed projects, pre-projects and BWP-related activities (CRF(LIX)/2) and declared four projects completed:

- Enhancing Capacity of Local Communities and Forest Administration to Effectively Implement Community Forestry Programme in Kratie and Mondulkiri Provinces of Cambodia, highlighting a successful community-based micro-credit activity;
- Providing Support for the Sustainable Management of the Fosseaux-Lions Gazetted Forest in the Savanna Region in Togo, highlighting the role of boundary marking in reducing conflict;

- Support for Women's Groups with the Restoration of Forest Landscapes in Blitta and Lacs Prefectures, Togo; and
- Community-based Restoration of Cyclone-Affected Vulnerable Mangrove Forests through the Empowerment of Coastal Communities and Women in Rewa Delta, Fiji.

**Ex-post Evaluation:** On selection of projects for ex-post evaluation in 2026 ([CRF\(LVIII\)/5](#)), the Secretariat requested the Committee to prioritize from among nine completed projects related to community participation in forest management, landscape restoration, and mangroves. COLOMBIA suggested evaluating a mangrove project due to the topic being relatively understudied.

**Review of Projects, Pre-projects, and BWP Project-based Activities in Implementation:** On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented an overview of 17 active projects ([CRF\(LIX\)/3](#)).

On landscape management of Giam Siak Kecil-Bukit Batu Biosphere reserve, INDONESIA described progress and highlighted its ambition to carry out an additional phase.

The Secretariat recommended termination of the community forest management programme in Papua New Guinea due to unsatisfactory financial audits and lack of government responsiveness to audit queries. JAPAN requested continuation of the project and asked the Secretariat to continue engaging with Papua New Guinea.

COSTA RICA presented on increasing the competitiveness of commercial reforestation through environmental service financing, silvicultural training handbooks, and product value addition. GUATEMALA highlighted cross-country learning opportunities with Costa Rica. Responding to the EU's questions on biodiversity integration, COSTA RICA highlighted its commitment to production of native species.

COLOMBIA provided an overview of a pilot project on sustainable management systems for secondary natural forests in the collective Afro-descendant community territory of the Bajo Calima Community Council. He highlighted the establishment of 35 hectares of secondary forests with enrichment of more than 8000 native species planted, and the training of more than 50 teachers and community leaders.

Regarding the project "Emergency Actions to Secure Forest Conservation and Livelihoods of Traditional Communities in the Brazilian Federal Conservation Unit Verde Para Sempre," BRAZIL reported that two previous phases of this project were part of the initiatives awarded with the FAO Global Technical Recognition for their contribution to sustainable agri-food systems.

THAILAND provided a status report on the activity on promoting quality timber production in smallholders and community-based teak and other valuable species plantations in the Tropics, explaining it is now 50% implemented. He identified challenges and opportunities, highlighting issues such as planting materials, wood productivity, certification, and the lack of financing for smallholders involved in long-term plantations.

**Projects, Pre-projects, and BWP Project-based Activities Awaiting Implementation Agreement:** On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented an overview of projects, pre-projects, and BWP Project-based Activities Awaiting Implementation Agreement ([CRF\(LIX\)/3](#)). The Secretariat reported two projects on track.

**Projects and Pre-projects Awaiting Financing:** On Wednesday, the Secretariat urged donors to consider the 13 projects awaiting financing ([CRF\(LIX\)/3](#)).

**Concept Notes Awaiting Expression of Interest by Potential Donors:** On Wednesday, the Secretariat urged donors to consider the concept notes awaiting expressions of interest by potential donors.

**Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2026:** On Wednesday, Christiane Epse Anzan (Côte d'Ivoire) was elected as CRF Chair for 2026. No nomination was made for Vice-Chair.

**Recommendations to the ITTC:** On Friday, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Council the projects pending financing.

**Report of the CRF Session:** On Friday, the Committee reviewed the draft CRF report ([CRF\(LIX\)/6](#)), with minor corrections.

### *Reports of the Committees*

On Friday, CEM-CFI Chair Tabliga presented the CEM-CFI report ([CEM-CFI\(LIX\)/4](#)). CRF Chair Merkell presented the CRF report ([CRF\(LIX\)/6](#)). Acting Chair Cassandra Price presented the CFA report ([CFA\(XL\)/7](#)). All reports were adopted.

### *Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Council for 2026*

The Council elected Cassandra Price (Australia) as Chair. PRODUCERS announced they have yet to determine a nomination for Vice Chair and will inform the Council as soon as this is done.

### *Dates and Venues of ITTC-62 and ITTC-63 and the Associated Sessions of the Committees*

JAPAN announced that ITTC-62 will take place in Yokohama in the second week of November 2026, in conjunction with the first Preparatory Committee meeting.

### *Decisions and Report of the Session*

On Friday, ITTC-61 adopted four decisions.

**Projects, Pre-Projects and Activities:** In decision 1(LXI), the Council endorses the approval obtained through its time-bound electronic no-objection procedure for the following projects and pre-projects:

- Restoration and Sustainable Management of Gallery Forests in the Mono Delta Biosphere Reserve in Benin;
- Study for the Restoration and Sustainable Management of Forest Resources in the Mô Plain, Togo;
- Ecological Restoration and Sustainable Management of the Sitatunga Valley Natural Community Park in Benin;
- Generation of Fundamental Information for the Second Cutting Cycle in the Amazon Rainforest;
- Developing Silvicultural Management Models for Forest Restoration Based on the Use of Seed Trees for the Establishment of Natural and Artificial Regeneration in the Province of Tahuamanu, Peru;
- Experimental Commercial Plantations of Caoba (*Swietenia macrophylla*) in the Northern Coastal Area of Peru;
- Strengthening Governance Systems and Local Regulatory Frameworks for the Resilience and Sustainability of Municipal and Community Forests in Western Guatemala;
- Support to Local Communities for the Restoration and Sustainable Management of Mountain Forests in the Sub-Northern Region of Togo; and
- Driving Forest-based Bioeconomy in Viet Nam's Acacia Forestry: Development of Guidance and Dialogue Platform for Cross-Border Vietnamese Acacia Value Chain Stakeholders.

The Council also:

- authorizes the financing for immediate implementation of projects, pre-project and activities listed in an annex to the decision;
- authorizes the financing for immediate implementation of all other approved projects, pre-projects and activities as soon as earmarked funds are available in the Special Account or the BPF Account;
- urges Members to consider financing any projects for which funds are not immediately available;
- appeals to Members to make unearmarked contributions to the Thematic Programmes Account and the Special Account;
- further appeals to Members to make voluntary contributions to the BPF; and
- requests the Executive Director to continue consulting with potential donors.

**Administrative Budget for 2026 and 2027:** In Decision 2(LXI), the Council approves and adopts the Biennial Administrative Budget for 2026 and 2027 (CFA(XL)/2 Rev.1), in the amount of USD 7,102,185 and USD 7,104,278, respectively.

**ITTO Biennial Work Programme for 2026–2027:** In Decision 3(LXI), the Council: adopts the 2026–2027 BWP; authorizes the Executive Director to seek voluntary contributions from Members and other funding sources; and requests the Secretariat to continue to indicate in the BWP how each activity aligns with the programmatic lines.

The Council also requests the Executive Director to:

- implement and/or facilitate the implementation of activities in the approved BWP;
- ensure that future activities to be funded outside the core budget are formulated as Concept Notes and included in the database, or as Council Decisions;
- continue close collaboration with members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and other international partners in implementing the 2026–2027 BWP; and
- report to Council on the progress in implementing the 2026–2027 BWP during ITTC-62 and ITTC-63.

**Matters Pertaining to Article 44 of ITTA, 2006:** In Decision 4(LXI), the Council:

- decides to extend the PWG mandate until ITTC-62;
- requests the PWG to work in close collaboration with the Secretariat and in line with the revised roadmap, to further analyze elements to consider for the future negotiation, and explore options and make recommendations for addressing these elements, based on discussions among Members;
- requests the PWG to submit a report, including recommendations on the tentative roadmap for 2027, to the Preparatory Committee and ITTC-62;
- requests the Secretariat to post the minutes of PWG meetings within four weeks of each meeting;
- encourages all Members to be actively engaged in the PWG to enhance inclusivity in the preparatory work for the future negotiation; and
- requests the Executive Director to seek voluntary contributions to meet the budgetary requirements for the implementation of this Decision, and authorizes the Executive Director to use funds from the Working Capital Reserve up to USD 212,000 in the absence of sufficient voluntary contributions.

### **Closure of the Session**

On Friday, Executive Director Satkuru commended ITTO Projects Manager Polycarpe Masupa-Kambale for his long-standing contribution and long service to the ITTO, recognizing his forthcoming retirement later this year. Members joined in expressing their congratulations and appreciation, underscoring the value of his service and dedication to the Organization.

The EU, PERU, INDIA, NEW ZEALAND, INDONESIA, CHINA, BRAZIL, CANADA, PANAMA, BENIN, COLOMBIA, the UK, MEXICO, THAILAND, AUSTRALIA, CONSUMERS and PRODUCERS thanked the ITTO Secretariat for its work and expressed appreciation to Panama for hosting ITTC-61.

The EU acknowledged the serious challenges facing the ITTO and emphasized the need to strengthen engagement and support for projects and capacity building. CONSUMERS commended the “collaborative spirit” of ITTC-61 and welcomed the new regional focal points, encouraging Members to engage actively with them. PRODUCERS noted the constructive tone of discussions and urged Members to continue working in the “spirit of friendship and mutual respect.”

BRAZIL, as host of the next UN Climate Change Conference in Belém, invited all Members to attend. CANADA encouraged Members to “build on the momentum” and engage with new partners, despite ongoing challenges. PANAMA underscored the importance of international cooperation in developing solutions that benefit biodiversity and local communities. The UK echoed calls for continued constructive engagement and commended the ITTO’s vital role in forest conservation. AUSTRALIA reaffirmed the ITTO’s continued relevance and essential role in the global landscape, urging Members to participate actively in the PWG.

ITTC-61 Chair Espinosa commended the Secretariat, donors, and the governments of Japan and Panama, emphasizing Members’ shared commitment to conserving tropical forests and promoting sustainable business. He highlighted that each delegation’s contributions had strengthened the ITTO as a cooperative platform uniting Producers and Consumers, noting, “We are not two groups; we are one organization that works together and cooperates for a better world.”

Espinosa further underscored Members’ commitment to securing the ITTO’s admission as an observer to the UN. He concluded by expressing hope that continued collaboration and alignment with global frameworks, including the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will advance conservation and sustainable development outcomes.

Chair Espinosa closed the session at 12:07 p.m.

### **A Brief Analysis of ITTC-61**

#### ***ITTO at a Crossroads: Prospects for a New Tropical Timber Trade Agreement***

In late October 2025, Panama—a country that bridges the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and stands at the crossroads of global trade—hosted the Sixty-first Session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-61). The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) is at its own crossroads as the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) expires in 2029. There is unprecedented interest in forest management and financing, with the world convening in the Amazon in November for climate change talks and Brazil launching the USD 125 billion Tropical Forests Forever Facility. Yet, the ITTO has struggled to capitalize on this

momentum, or on parallel discussions related to biodiversity and the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite consistent efforts by the ITTO Secretariat, the profile of the legal timber trade remains low, many member countries are in arrears with their assessed contributions, there is a diminishing number of projects submitted to ITTO for funding by producing countries, and most donors struggle to mobilize voluntary contributions.

At ITTC-61, Members reaffirmed their commitment to addressing these pressing challenges as they look ahead to the meeting of the Preparatory Committee tasked with negotiating the new ITTA. This analysis considers the road ahead. It examines whether there is adequate cooperation among Members to move forward, leadership to drive the process, a reliable roadmap, and financial resources to fuel the journey.

### ***Concretizing Cooperation among Members***

ITTC-61 demonstrated a high level of internal trust, commitment and goodwill among participants to work together towards a new ITTA. Committees worked efficiently and Chairs infused sessions with energy, creating a mood that provided for open conversation inside and outside the conference room. One Consumer caucus member even used the word “fun” to describe their early morning coordination sessions. Delegations were increasingly made up of a new, younger generation of representatives, who engaged with fresh enthusiasm without getting bogged down in historical legacies. One noted, “We know that we are going to make some mistakes along the way, but at least we are ready to move forward.”

Consumers and Producers expressed common goals and visions, with many Members questioning the continued relevance of the historical groupings that have kept Consumers and Producers on different sides for decades. Panama noted that despite being in the Producer caucus, they import three times more tropical timber than they produce. In closing remarks, ITTC-61 Chair Carlos Espinosa Peña (Panama) captured the general mood that “we are not two separate groups, we are together working on a single agreement.”

Despite the cohesion of Members, there were notable absences. The US delegation was missing, even though it played a central role as Co-Chair of the Preparatory Working Group (PWG) to consider elements of a future agreement. Equally, African countries were poorly represented, reportedly facing visa challenges. The Council did not let this slow down progress, with Canada stepping in to present the PWG’s work, and Benin offering to lead engagement to mobilize African countries during the intersessional period.

While engagement was dynamic within the room, the Secretariat and multiple partners lamented the low participation of Members during intersessional consultations. However, Benin, Panama and India brought a ray of hope by committing to lead efforts to enhance Member engagement in the forthcoming intersessional regional consultations. Members left Panama with momentum and strengthened relationships to support work over the coming year.

### ***Leaders to Drive the Process***

Even with a committed Membership, there is a need for strong leaders to provide direction and push the process forward. The ITTO has a committed and passionate leader in Executive Director, Sheam Satkuru, who outlined the diverse efforts of the Secretariat to increase the ITTO’s global visibility and mobilize resources. However, she was also direct with Members on the challenges ahead, noting that “the organization is [only] as strong as its members ask it to be.” In this appeal, Satkuru pleaded with delegates to lead advocacy with their home ministries to integrate

ITTO engagement into their forest trade, traceability and legality discussions and projects. On the sidelines, one delegate noted, “We need a Consumer country to take the lead with vision and finance, which will bring others along. The Secretariat can’t do it alone.” Despite leadership from individuals in the room, no country emerged from the session as the driver to support the Secretariat. Some in the halls expressed hope that either the ITTO host country of Japan or the US would find a way to fill this space in the coming years.

### ***A Clear Roadmap?***

Another positive sign within the meeting was the clear consensus among Members on the value of negotiating a new agreement, as the meeting ended with a path forward to ITTC-62. Intersessional reports and consultations from the PWG, led by Panama and the US, were well received, although not all members had reviewed the reports by the end of the week. The PWG outlined 10 key elements that could provide a roadmap for substantive negotiations, such as scope, mandate, membership structure, and voting. While it is too early to reach consensus on these issues, some Members were forthcoming with provisional positions. The work of the PWG seemed to take the pressure off this meeting, but importantly placed the pressure on all Members to come prepared to ITTC-62 with positions and mandates.

However, the ITTA process risks losing focus during negotiations and a few Members had to consistently remind participants to focus on trade. The ITTA is a trade agreement, but Members tend to be represented by delegates with various backgrounds, including environment, forestry, biodiversity, development cooperation, and trade and commerce. At times, Members had to constrain their enthusiasm over opportunities to expand scope with a reminder of the complications of creating overlap with other international agreements. The Secretariat offered to help Members focus on specific issues during the intersessional period by inviting countries to share multiple contacts to ensure broad participation and targeted representation from the most relevant national technical experts.

In this context, a few Members quietly questioned whether the ITTO was currently responding to the biggest challenges facing trade, such as helping countries and the private sector navigate the increasingly complex regulatory environment for legal timber trade, for example with the coming into force of the EU Deforestation Regulations. Yet the meeting also saw an increasingly coordinated (though lightly represented) private sector representation, to help keep the Producers and Consumers focused. The Trade Advisory Group presented a clear, trade-focused vision of opportunities and risks to be addressed in the coming years, reminding delegates that “good trade policy is good forest policy.”

Balancing the goals of remaining focused on timber and trade, while creating partnerships with the climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development communities, will remain a large challenge for the ITTO. That said, frequent reflections on the roadmap should help keep the organization on track.

### ***Enough Fuel to Drive the ITTO Forward?***

Members in the room were passionate regarding the value of the ITTO’s unique model. They celebrated the production of world class practical and science-based products, and projects that respond directly to member government needs and discrete proposals. The approach is seemingly in line with global funding priorities. Yet, the Executive Director was clear on the challenges when she stated, “Is the financial model for the ITTO working? I don’t think it is. We’ve known this for over a decade, the donor communities have

competing interests for development funding and prefer bilateral agreements and financial contributions bypassing multilateral systems.” As with previous years, Satkuru urged Members to bring solutions to the Secretariat. She recognized that the ITTO needs to access intergovernmental or philanthropic funds beyond Members’ contributions, although she also acknowledged that these actors do not necessarily prioritize funding to intergovernmental organizations. Despite the recurring refrain, there were no tangible signs of financial progress over the week, with only Japan providing voluntary contributions to the Biennial Work Programme during the Council meeting.

Producer countries were also clear. Brazil noted that “we don’t have an interest in spending our time developing projects that donors are not going to fund.” This also explains the reason many Producer Members are in arrears. One Consumer delegate acknowledged the problem, noting that “we don’t blame them. How can they justify paying to be a member of a process if their projects are never funded?”

The meeting ended with a decision to move forward with a Preparatory Committee to begin negotiations for a successor to ITTA, 2006, and an understanding that the Secretariat will likely be required to dip into reserves to fund the process. While negotiating the Agreement presents strong justification for using reserves, delegates worried that if they cannot mobilize funding to negotiate a new ITTA, it does not bode well for long-term enthusiasm for supporting ITTO.

### Next Steps for the ITTA

Crossroads can be a place for picking up new passengers, exchanging ideas, clarifying direction and refueling to create momentum for a long journey ahead. As the ITTC moves into its 40th year and embarks on negotiations for the next ITTA, there are reasons for optimism. There are also distinct risks that funding will not materialize to fuel the organization’s mandate, and that Producer and Consumer countries alike will be distracted by other forest-related processes and bilateral approaches to trade. Given the trust, leadership, and dedication of this group of delegates, the ITTC is well positioned to negotiate a new ITTA by 2029. However, a bigger challenge than negotiating a new agreement will be for delegates to elevate the profile of the ITTO within their home countries, mobilize the financing and technical interest, and launch ambitious projects that show off the technical expertise of the ITTO and the value of its model to the global community.

### Upcoming Meetings

**2025 UN Climate Change Conference:** This event will include the 30th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 30), the 20th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 20), and the seventh meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 7). The 63rd sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 63) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 63) will also meet. **dates:** 10-21 November 2025 **location:** Belém, Brazil **www:** [unfccc.int/cop30](https://unfccc.int/cop30)

**12th session of the IPBES Plenary:** IPBES 12 will consider interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health as well as transformative change. This IPBES Plenary will be preceded by a Stakeholder Day on 2 February 2026. **dates:** 3-8 February 2026 **location:** Manchester, UK **www:** [ipbes.net/events/ipbes-12-plenary](https://ipbes.net/events/ipbes-12-plenary)

**UNFF20:** The UN Forum on Forests will address policy dialogue, development, and decision making. **dates:** 11-15 May 2026 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** [un.org/esa/forests](https://un.org/esa/forests)

**SBSTTA 28:** The 28th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to the CBD will discuss, among other things, the global review of progress in GBF implementation; synthetic biology; sustainable wildlife management; and marine and coastal biodiversity. **dates:** 27 July - 1 August 2026 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-28](https://cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-28)

**UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 17):** The 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD will review GBF implementation and address issues under the Convention and its Protocols. **dates:** 19–30 October 2026 **location:** Yerevan, Armenia **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/COP-17](https://cbd.int/meetings/COP-17)

**First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee and ITTC-62:** The next meeting of the ITTC and its Associated Committees will continue the work of the Organization. ITTC-62 will take place in conjunction with the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the negotiation of the next ITTA. **dates:** November 2026 (TBA) **location:** Yokohama, Japan **www:** [itto.int/events/](https://itto.int/events/)

For additional upcoming events, see: [sdg.iisd.org](https://sdg.iisd.org)

### Glossary

BPF	Bali Partnership Fund
BWP	Biennial Work Programme
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEM	Committee on Economics, Statistics, and Markets
CFA	Committee on Finance and Administration
CFI	Committee on Forest Industry
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRF	Committee on Reforestation and Forest Management
CSAG	Civil Society Advisory Group
EGILAT	Expert Group on Illegal Logging and Associated Trade
EUDR	EU Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IAG	Informal Advisory Group
ITTA	International Tropical Timber Agreement
ITTC	International Tropical Timber Council
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
PWG	Preparatory Working Group
REFACOF	Network for Community Forest Management
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
TAG	Trade Advisory Group
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	UN Forum on Forests