

Statement by Mr. Emmanuel Ze Meka
Executive Director, ITTO
Technical Meeting of the National Correspondents to
the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010

Mr. Jan Heino, FAO colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I very much regret not being able to present this statement in person to such an important meeting due to ITTO's heavy workload. ITTO will be represented at this meeting later in the week but I sincerely apologize for not being present for the opening session. I appreciate the kind offer of our friends in the FAO Forestry Department to have a brief written statement read on my behalf during the opening session of your meeting.

ITTO appreciates as much as anyone the huge amount of work that goes into the FRA and the importance to the global forest community of such a vital database on all types of forests. We have been users of the FRAs since ITTO came into existence in the late 1980s, and have been more closely involved in the process during the past decade as members of the FRA advisory group and (in a modest manner) as co-sponsors of some FRA related activities such as these meetings of national correspondents. We are pleased once again to be providing a small contribution to an FRA correspondents' meeting and hope that ITTO can further increase its involvement in the FRA 2010 process over the next few years.

The assessment of forests and forest management is a key issue in the global arena today. Fora like CBD, UNFCCC, UNFF (not to mention national governments and our own organizations) are all clamoring for better, more comprehensive information on forests to help them meet their assorted mandates. The international community has been seeking a key, core set of forestry information for assessing forests and their management for almost as long as ITTO has existed. The evolving FRA is helping to meet these and other international forest information needs.

ITTO recently became familiar with the difficulties and costs involved in carrying out large-scale forest surveys, having assessed the status of tropical forest management in 2005. We are pleased to see that the proposals for the data tables for FRA 2010 include criteria and aspects for assessing SFM used in the ITTO study which should allow for greater synergies. ITTO has been asked to carry out a second such assessment for 2010 and preliminary funds have been pledged for this in our 2008-2009 Work Programme. We believe that the most effective way to carry out this work is in close collaboration with FAO and the FRA, and we will be consulting closely with our colleagues in the Forestry Department and interested participants at this meeting to further develop areas for collaboration.

ITTO and the FAO Forestry Department have developed an excellent collaborative relationship in recent years with a range of partnerships and cooperative activities that is too long to list here. A key factor in the establishment of this relationship has been the trust and goodwill that have built up at all levels of both Organizations. ITTO is extremely grateful to all of our colleagues in FAO for facilitating this, and to Mr. Jan Heino for actively promoting such collaboration.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this important meeting. I wish you every success over the next week.