

## International Tropical Timber Organization Successor Agreement Concluded

On January 31, 2006, International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) announced that members agreed on a new International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) that will reinforce work to bring tropical forests under sustainable management and increase the role of the tropical timber trade in sustainable development.

The ITTO, which was created in 1983, aims to both conserve tropical forests and assist countries to develop economically. The treaty under which it operates - the ITTA - is renegotiated periodically to take into account changes in global forest policies and the world timber trade.

Representatives from more than 180 governments (including the United States) and international organizations met in January 2006 to finalize the agreement. The agreement contains several changes that are likely to lead to significant improvements in the ITTO's organizational work.

The ITTO's longstanding philosophy of using tropical forests in a sustainable way for economic development is stated explicitly in the new ITTA. The two key objectives are: to promote the expansion and diversification of international trade in tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested forests and to promote the sustainable management of tropical timber producing forests.

Related to the first objective, the ITTO will, among other things, help improve the competitiveness of wood products relative to other materials, boost the marketing of tropical timber from sustainably managed and legally harvested sources, and share information on certification and other aspects of the international timber market.

In pursuit of the second key objective, the ITTO will help countries to improve forest law enforcement and governance, address illegal logging and related trade in tropical timber, and undertake sustainable forest management and forest restoration. It will also strengthen the capacity of countries to gather and report data on the tropical timber trade and forest management.

The new ITTA acknowledges the role of ITTO in assisting countries to pursue sustainable development and alleviate poverty and encourages forest-dependent indigenous and local communities to achieve sustainable forest management.

ITTO relies for much of its work on funds contributed on a voluntary basis, up to now mostly by the governments of Japan, Switzerland and the United States. To help boost such contributions, the new agreement creates a sub-account for thematic sub-programs, which, some donors say, will lead to greatly increased funding for specific areas of work.

The new ITTA, (ITTA 2006), is expected to come into force in 2008 and will operate for ten years, with the possibility of extensions of up to eight years. ITTO will continue to function under the prior agreement (ITTA 1994), until the new agreement is ratified.

For a detailed report on the negotiations go to <http://www.iisd.ca/forestry/itto/itta4/>.  
For more information on ITTO go to [www.itto.or.jp](http://www.itto.or.jp). For further information, please  
contact: Tom Westcot, 202-720-3331, [thomas.westcot@fas.usda.gov](mailto:thomas.westcot@fas.usda.gov).