

***STATEMENT BY EMMANUEL ZE MEKA,
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THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION (ITTO),
YOKOHAMA, 20 DECEMBER 2007***

Honourable Kouichi Fujishiro, Chairman of the Yokohama City Council,
Honourable Heads of Political Parties,
Honorable Members of the Yokohama City Council,
Honourable Mayor,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am exceptionally delighted and very humbled by this opportunity to address this meeting of your esteemed City Council. This is for me a unique opportunity to thank, through you, the City of Yokohama for the invaluable support they are providing to ITTO. It is now more than 20 years that the City of Yokohama has hosted the Headquarters of the International Tropical Timber Organization. Twenty years of multifaceted support to the Organization including the provision of the premises of its Headquarters and other facilities. This has helped our Organization to have an excellent working environment and has greatly contributed to its achievements, of which we can all be proud. The generosity of the City of Yokohama is indeed very well placed as ITTO is addressing very critical issues, which, I am convinced, are not only high on the agenda of the international community, but are also dear to the citizens of Yokohama.

For those of you who might not be very familiar with ITTO, I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with brief background information of this Organization and its activities. ITTO is an intergovernmental organization which was established in 1986 under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). ITTO was established to administer the provisions of the International Tropical Timber Agreement of 1983 (ITTA, 1983). Discussions regarding the Agreement started in the 1970s amidst international concerns over the destruction of tropical forests and the

degradation of tropical forest resources with dramatic consequences on people's livelihoods, the environment and national economies. It was perceived at that time that the international tropical timber trade was a key driver of this dramatic situation. The ITTA, 1983, was therefore established to reduce the deforestation of tropical forests and at the same time to maintain/expand a sustainable international tropical timber trade that can contribute to national economies and to the improvement of rural communities' livelihoods. The successor agreement, the ITTA, 1994, and the most recent ITTA, 2006, which is expected to come into force next year, have not fundamentally departed from these objectives. Members have established ITTO because they care about tropical forests and about people living within them. I am convinced sincerely, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Council, that you also do. The main goal of ITTO is therefore to promote the conservation and sustainable management, use and trade of tropical forest resources.

ITTO provides a forum of consultation and cooperation for action among tropical timber producing countries and countries consuming tropical timber and timber products. The membership of ITTO stands now at 60 countries, 33 producer countries hosting around 80% of tropical forests, and 27 consumer countries accounting for over 90% of imports of tropical timber and tropical timber products. Major producer countries include Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cameroon, and Gabon, and major consumer countries include Japan, China, Republic of Korea, the U.S.A., and the European Union.

ITTO is governed by the International Tropical Timber Council, which is made up of the entire membership of ITTO. The Council has been meeting in sessions twice a year since the establishment of ITTO, one session at the Headquarters here in Yokohama, and one session in one of the three producer regions of Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America. These sessions held in tropical timber producing countries helped to boost the image of forest values and raise awareness, in the country and in the region, on issues surrounding the sustainable management of forests such as deforestation, illegal logging, biodiversity conservation, community participation in sustainable forest

management, benefit sharing, governance issues, and for some time now, climate change.

The day-to-day business of the Organization is performed by a lean Secretariat of about 40 people of 14 nationalities. In order to achieve its objectives, ITTO provides an effective forum to discuss policy issues related to trade in timber and timber products and to the management of their resource base. Such discussions in which not only producer and consumer member countries participate, but also representatives from trade groups, NGOs, civil society and relevant international organizations, usually result in high-level political decisions that have direct impact on the tropical timber economy. These discussions have also resulted in a very impressive normative body of work, in particular with regard to aspects pertaining to the sustainable management of tropical forests. ITTO was, for instance, the first organization in the world to develop criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management in 1991. This pioneering effort has now been followed by many other national, regional and international organizations throughout the world and for various types of forest ecosystems. Criteria and indicators constitute now an essential element of sound forest management and the basis for forest certification.

ITTO has also developed guidelines for almost all major aspects of sustainable forest management such as:

- ITTO Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Natural Tropical Forests;
- ITTO Guidelines for the Establishment and Sustainable Management of Planted Tropical Forests;
- ITTO Guidelines on Fire Management in Tropical Forests;
- ITTO Guidelines for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in Tropical Production Forests;
- ITTO Guidelines for the Restoration, Management and Rehabilitation of Degraded and Secondary Tropical Forests;
- ITTO Mangrove Workplan 2002-2006; and
- ITTO/FAO Best Practices for Improved Law Compliance in the Forest Sector.

Through its project work, ITTO translates policy decisions into field action and the guidelines aim at facilitating their implementation. Translating policy decision into concrete field actions is one of the major comparative advantages of ITTO.

We have been able to provide direct assistance to member countries, at field level, where it is most needed. ITTO has implemented more than 800 projects, pre-projects and activities in its member countries, worth more than US\$300 million. These projects have not only tackled particular problems at the field level, but have also produced results that have helped countries to improve their policies towards a better management of their forest resources and expansion of their tropical timber trade. So far, the major donors of the Organization have been the governments of Japan, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and the Netherlands. We are working hard to expand the donor basis of our Organization. The perspective for the entry into force of the new agreement, the ITTA, 2006, which includes provisions for new funding mechanisms, gives us much hope in this connection.

The bulk of the funding received from donors has helped channel assistance to tropical timber producing member countries to meet the objectives of the Organization. Activities cover three areas of work, namely Reforestation and Forest Management, Forest Industry and Economic Information and Market Intelligence.

In the field of Reforestation and Forest Management, we are assisting members to address issues such as the promotion of the application of criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of tropical forests; reduced impact logging practices, forest plantations and community forestry in order to alleviate poverty and improve rural livelihoods; forest governance, including fighting against illegal logging and support to forest law enforcement; and biodiversity conservation, including the establishment of protected and transboundary conservation areas between neighbouring countries. The work

of ITTO on transboundary conservation areas is particularly important. It contributes not only to the conservation of forest resources, but also to building and maintaining a peaceful and cooperative environment between countries. The programme now encompasses more than 10 million ha involving more than ten countries. Examples of such conservation areas include: 2.42 million ha in the Condor Range between Peru and Ecuador; 2.85 million ha between Peru and Bolivia; 1.10 million ha between Malaysia and Indonesia, protecting about 1,000 orangutans and other endangered species; and 137,000 ha to establish a gorilla sanctuary between Gabon and Cameroon.

The second area of work is Forest Industry, where the Organization is promoting further processing and utilization efficiency of tropical timber and timber products. The Organization is assisting industries, in particular community and small and medium-size ones, which have a great potential to improve rural community livelihoods to enhance their capacity in sustainable forestry practices, value addition and export of legally and sustainably produced timber and timber products. We also promote the utilization of lesser used timber species and non-timber forest products, therefore creating additional development opportunities for rural communities. Tropical forests include indeed many timber and non-timber forest species, some of which are insufficiently used or accepted by the international markets.

The third area of work is Economic Information and Market Intelligence, where the Organization is promoting the expansion of trade in timber and timber products from sustainably managed sources. The Organization is collecting and disseminating information to improve market transparency. It is also assisting members to address issues which have critical impact on the markets such as market access and subsidies, timber procurement policies, illegal trade, trade data discrepancies, and certification. A new area is now being promoted by ITTO: the payment for ecosystems services from tropical forests.

This wide range of activities is justified by the inter-linkages between the issues and challenges facing the sustainable management of tropical forests. These issues and challenges have to be tackled through an integrated approach. Sustainable forest management is the concept that ITTO is promoting in order to implement this integrated approach and from which the well-known ITTO Objective 2000 was derived. This Objective, which is a commitment by members to moving as rapidly as possible towards achieving exports of tropical timber and timber products from sustainably managed sources, is continuing to guide the activities of the Organization.

Mr. Chairman, with the just concluded COP 13 of the UNFCCC in Bali, Indonesia, I cannot fail to highlight the importance of sustainable forest management in the strategies to combat climate change and mitigate its effects. Deforestation causes almost 20% of annual global greenhouse gas emissions and it is happening mainly in developing countries, many of which are members of ITTO. It is also known that poor people in developing countries are the ones who are the least equipped to address the effects of climate change. It is therefore imperative to reduce deforestation in the tropics and the concepts of Avoided Deforestation (AD) and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) have been proposed as key elements of a global climate change mitigation strategy. With a membership that encompasses more than 1.3 billion ha of tropical forests, ITTO has a great role to play in forest-related strategies aimed at combating and mitigating the effects of climate change. Sustainable forest management helps reduce deforestation and at the same time promotes the rehabilitation of degraded forests, as well as the establishment of forest plantations and of conservation areas. Sustainable forest management also promotes the conservation of biodiversity and enhances rural community livelihoods. Of note, more than 2.3 billion people live in developing countries members of ITTO, some in acute poverty.

ITTO is proud to have established very strong working relationships with a wide range of NGOs, private sector and civil society groups, as well as with

regional and international organizations, in particular members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests such as FAO, CIFOR, UNFF, CBD, the World Bank, IUFRO, IUCN, etc. This extended cooperation has put great value on the Organization's policy discussion and has enhanced the quality of its field actions. We have also established close working relationships with many Japanese agencies involved in forestry development assistance, including the Forestry Agency, JICA, JOFCA, ISME, etc.

The aims of this brief account of the activities and achievements of ITTO during its twenty years of existence are manifold: First to underscore the importance of the Organization as a major key player at the international arena with regard to policy discussion on matters related to forests, trade and environment. The Government of Japan and the City of Yokohama are also major players regarding those issues at the global level. It would therefore only be natural that the Government of Japan and the City of Yokohama use fully the potential of ITTO to address these challenges. Secondly, and as I mentioned earlier, I would like to recognize and underscore the importance of the choice made by the City of Yokohama in hosting the ITTO's Headquarters. ITTO is the only international U.N. treaty-based organization in Japan and it is located in Yokohama. I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express, in the name of the entire membership of ITTO, our deep gratitude for the support provided by the City and the citizens of Yokohama. I hope that my previous remarks have been able to describe how useful and appropriate this support has been.

At this juncture, I would like to pay a special tribute to the Honourable Hiroshi Nakada, Mayor of the City of Yokohama. The Honourable Mayor Nakada has been, since his tenure in office, a very fervent and faithful supporter of ITTO. He has been addressing and sharing his views with our Council at almost every November session. He has also been extremely cooperative and very responsive to any request that would improve the work of our Organization. We are extremely proud of our good relationship with Mayor Nakada.

Mr. Chairman, in spite of the good results already achieved by ITTO, and which have propelled the Organization to the forefront of forest-related international organizations, we still have many challenges ahead and we need the continued support of the City and citizens of Yokohama. This is the third objective of my statement today.

I just mentioned the problem of climate change for which ITTO can play a very important role. Climate change is a very serious global issue with dramatic consequences on biodiversity, the environment and on the very existence of humankind.

Mr. Chairman, we have to recognize that climate change gives us an opportunity to see few things from new perspectives. More than before, we understand that humankind has ultimately the same fate in the long run, despite temporary differences that might exist in different parts of the world. Therefore, solidarity and cooperation should be deeply rooted in the values of our societies. The disappearance of species has been continuing unabated, because of deforestation and other human-driven destructive activities and in spite of many calls for action to reverse the trend. The shock that we have now is not for the Japanese sea lion, a species which became extinct in 1950, nor for the Hokkaido wolf also known as Ezo Wolf, which became extinct during the Meiji restoration period, nor for any other unknown plant or animal species. The problem confronting us today, Mr. Chairman, is because the species that is now seriously in danger is called *Homo sapiens*, the human species, ourselves. The call for combating and mitigating the effects of climate change is a call for mankind's survival.

There are two major differences between us, as humankind, and these extinct species, and these differences have been clearly highlighted in the report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which received this year's Nobel Peace Prize, together with former U.S. Vice-president Mr. Al Gore. Firstly, unlike the other extinct species, we seem to be the agents of our own extinction and of the extinction of other species because of our destructive

activities towards our environment. Secondly, unlike the extinct species, we have the power and the means to halt and reverse this trend, should we have the will and should we depart from our selfish tactics.

The issue of climate change also offers us a good opportunity to promote a more friendly relationship with nature, which, I am afraid to say, many in our current generation find difficult, mainly because we care more about what we consider our immediate well-being and not as much about future generations or what will happen after we leave this world. I am referring to the lack of solidarity with humankind. Under these circumstances I think that, while we continue to earnestly raise awareness and develop strategies to combat and mitigate the effects of climate change, we should also boost environmental education for children in order to facilitate the emergence of new generations of world citizens with a greater sense of environmental conservation values. The wish of ITTO would be to work with the City of Yokohama and other interested parties to promote such an environmental education programme. Such a programme could also involve children from other parts of the world, and thus strengthen solidarity and international cooperation.

In order to firmly position ITTO at the forefront among the key players on climate change mitigation strategies, we are planning to organize here in Yokohama, in spring next year, an international conference on climate change and the sustainable management of tropical forests. The objective of the conference will be to further refine ITTO's strategy towards climate change and to identify concrete measures to be implemented by and through the Organization. Without determined and concrete actions, the issue of climate change cannot be addressed. It is our fervent wish to cooperate with the City of Yokohama to organize this important conference.

Before closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate through you, the City of Yokohama for having been selected to host the Fourth TICAD International Conference. This is indeed a great honour for the City of Yokohama. After more than 16 years in this beautiful city,

I consider myself a citizen of Yokohama, and as such, and due to the fact that Yokohama is equally ITTO's Headquarters and that I come from an African country, Cameroon, I am particularly proud of this selection. I am delighted to note that although TICAD IV will focus on African development, it will take place with the issue of climate change very much in mind. As already indicated to the Honourable Mayor Nakada, ITTO is very keen and enthusiastic to fully participate and contribute to make TICAD IV a great success.

Mr. Chairman, once again, I thank you most sincerely for this opportunity to share my views with your esteemed Council.

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