

INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER ORGANIZATION



MEDIA ADVISORY

ITTO appoints Executive Director, sets new priorities to increase economic contribution of tropical forest sector while reducing deforestation and increasing resilience

YOKOHAMA, JAPAN, 20 December 2021: The International Tropical Timber Council appointed Ms Sheam Satkuru as the new Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) at its virtual 57th session concluded in early December 2021 and also endorsed a strategic action plan to set the Organization's path for the next five years.

ITTO is an intergovernmental organization promoting the conservation and sustainable management, use and trade of tropical forest resources, and its members represent the bulk of the world's tropical forests and of the global tropical timber trade. ITTO develops internationally agreed policy documents to promote sustainable forest management and forest conservation and assists tropical member countries to adapt such policies to local circumstances and to implement them in the field through projects. In addition, ITTO collects, analyzes and disseminates data on the production and trade of tropical timber and funds projects and other actions aimed at developing sustainable forest industries.

Ms Satkuru, a citizen of Malaysia, was the Malaysian Timber Council's Regional Director for Europe between 2007 and 2017, and she has been Director of Operations at ITTO since 2017. Ms Satkuru is a specialist in international trade, with strong skills and experience in legal and policy analysis related to international affairs, the timber and forest industries, communications, public affairs and outreach. She is also a skilled and experienced international negotiator; she holds a master's degree in law from Kings College at the University of London and was called to the English Bar in 1993.

In accepting the appointment, Ms Satkuru referred to the principle of consensus as one of ITTO's strongest features. "As the first woman to be appointed as the Organization's Executive Director, I applaud all members of the International Tropical Timber Council for the consultative and collaborative spirit they have shown," she said. "I pledge to take ITTO's interests forward in a fair, balanced and equitable manner for all its members." Ms Satkuru will take up her new position in early 2022.

Council endorses new Strategic Action Plan

ITTO's new Strategic Action Plan will guide policy and project work for the next five years. It comprises four strategic priorities, four crosscutting strategies and 38 targets to be accomplished by 2026. The strategic priorities are:

1. Promote good governance and policy frameworks to enhance financing and investment in sustainable tropical forest management, legal and sustainable forest product supply chains and related trade.
2. Increase the contribution of the tropical forest sector to national and local economies and resilient livelihoods, including through the further processing and trade of tropical timber and other forest products and services.
3. Reduce tropical deforestation and forest degradation, enhance forest landscape restoration and the resilience of forest ecosystems to climate change, and conserve forest biodiversity and ecosystem services.
4. Improve the quality, availability and timeliness of information on tropical forest product markets, supply chains and international trade, including challenges and opportunities related to market access, expansion and diversification.

Impacts of pandemic on tropical timber trade could be felt for years, say panellists at Annual Market Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated economic fallout has had major impacts on the tropical timber trade in all the major trading regions, with potentially long-term ramifications, according to speakers at the [2021 Annual Market Discussion](#), which took place during the Council session.

The event, which was organized by ITTO's Trade Advisory Group (TAG), focused on challenges in tropical

timber manufacturing and trade arising during the pandemic and explored the near-term outlook for the sector. It featured speakers from Brazil, China, Indonesia, Europe, North America and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

“Harvesting timber is not deforestation”—Trade Advisory Group wants ITTO to spread the word

The Climate Change Conference (COP26) held recently in Glasgow should galvanize demand for sustainably produced tropical timber products rather than promulgate misconceptions about the role of the timber trade in deforestation, according to a TAG statement delivered in conjunction with the 2021 Annual Market Discussion.

“We do not want the general public to take away the call for action in COP26 as to mean avoiding the use of tropical timber products,” said the statement. “We call upon ITTO, as the global leader working with the tropical forests and trade, to stand up and state very clearly that harvesting timber is not deforestation.”

TAG was established in 2000 to provide inputs to ITTO’s policy and project work. It is open to anyone with an interest in the tropical timber trade, including representatives of tropical forest industries, timber exporters and importers, timber trade and industry consultants, and trade and industry associations.

The TAG statement is available [here](#).

Civil Society Advisory Group wants ITTO to do more to address climate change

In a statement at the Council session, the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) recommended that ITTO commission a paper to outline how ITTO members, as well as the Secretariat, the private sector, TAG, civil society and CSAG can contribute to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change in concrete ways.

“Forests were and are still being poorly managed, their resources over-exploited and are being lost,” according to the statement. “How can ITTO members work towards actions to implement the many relevant guidelines, policies, and reports produced over the years? The paper can outline how each stakeholder can do this. Currently, member countries do not seem to be using ITTO resources in any concrete way where these resources can contribute.”

The CSAG statement also said that the sustainable and responsible use of forest resources and tackling illegal and unsustainable use must be an integral part of COVID-19 recovery strategies if the world is to “build back better” towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

Council awards 18 new Fellowships

The Council awarded 18 new ITTO Fellowships at its 57th session. Of this latest group of Fellows, seven are from Africa, six are from the Asia-Pacific region and five are from Latin America and the Caribbean. Seven of the 18 candidates are women. ITTO’s long-running Fellowship Programme has enabled more than 1400 young and mid-career professionals to improve their professional knowledge and career prospects while working to advance sustainable tropical forestry and a legal and sustainable tropical timber trade.

The International Tropical Timber Council meets once a year to discuss a wide-ranging agenda aimed at promoting sustainable tropical forest management and the trade of sustainably produced tropical timber.

More information on the Council session is available at www.itto.int/ittc-57 and <https://enb.iisd.org/ITTC57-International-Tropical-Timber-Council>