

**Closing Statement**  
**Civil Society Advisory Group**  
**Meeting on Operational Modalities of the Future Work of the ITTC**  
**Accra, Ghana, June 12, 2008**

Distinguished Chair, Honorable Ministers, Executive Director, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all we would like to thank the Government of Ghana and the city of Accra for hosting this session and welcoming us so warmly, and to thank the ITTO and the Secretariat for the excellent organization and facilitation.

In keeping with the direction that we have been given by the Organization and the Secretariat, we have begun a new phase of our role as the Civil Society Advisory Group, taking advantage of the hosting of the meeting in Accra to bring experiences and voices of civil society leaders in the region mainly from Ghana, as well as Liberia and Cameroon. We have contributed to the thinking on the proposed thematic programme on Community Forest Management and Enterprises and this is the first step in our commitment to widen the membership in the CSAG and deepen the linkages of civil society organizations, including forest producer communities, to ITTO and its member governments regionally as well as globally. We commit to continue this process through the period of the ITTA, 2006.

We see that a robust CSAG as well as a robust TAG have a lot to contribute to the future workprogram, in bringing new perspectives and data to the ITTO members, fostering stronger regional relationships with civil society, community producers, and private industry, and providing critical and constructive inputs to the ITTO for the evaluation of programmes and projects. We hope to play a larger role in the implementation of the ITTA 2006 and help in the delivery of the agreed work plans. In order for this to be possible, there needs to be a mechanism in the biennial work program to support the participation of a core set of producer country CSAG and TAG members to the meetings, to fund preparatory work with our constituency, as well as to collaborate with ITTO on strategic analysis or special workshops.

In keeping with the agenda of the first day of the meeting which provided a rich set of presentations and discussion centered on African ITTO producer countries, including Ghana, CSAG focused its scheduled event in this meeting on bringing together a wide range of experiences of civil society in the region in furthering community forest management and enterprises, and analyzing the role of forest tenure and governance in enabling the emergence and success of community forestry. Community and small-scale forest enterprises are a major and growing part of the economy in the African region, with great potential to generate jobs and income, contribution to sustainable forest management, and poverty alleviation.

CSAG would like to strongly endorse two comments by the ITTO delegates on this issue:

The ITTO Delegate from Liberia observed that the balanced development of the forest sector among the three pillars (commercial, conservation, and community)

could not in fact be carried out successfully without taking into account that communities and their dynamics are a cross-cutting theme of all three pillars.

ITTO Delegate from Guatemala recommended that the future work of the ITTO be shaped by a new openness to bring the multiple voices of government, civil society, communities, and the private sector to the table, and recognize that the underlying issues which brought the ITTO into existence continue to need action, one best taken with a broader input from these stakeholders.

We are actively working to support the preparation of the November Yaoundé conference on forest tenure and governance announced by Minister Ngolle Ngolle in support of forest reform agendas in the Africa region and to support the development of community and small-scale initiatives and enterprises. CSAG plans to take an active role in this event, helping with its financing, undertaking background strategic analysis, fostering a robust participation of communities and civil society, and bringing relevant experiences to the workshop for exchange and deliberation.

On behalf of the Civil Society Advisory Group,

Kyeretwie Opoku and Rebecca Dottey, Civic Response, Ghana  
Stewart Maginnis, Cléto Ndikumagenge and Adewale Adeleke, IUCN – The World Conservation Union  
Augusta Molnar and Elizabeth Ashamu, Rights and Resources Initiative  
Angeline Ndo, Model Forest, Cameroon  
Samuel Nketiah, Tropenbos, Ghana  
Gene Birikorang, Hamilton Consulting, Ghana  
Francis Colee, Green Advocates, Liberia  
Emelia Arthur, Integrated Action for Development Initiatives, Ghana  
Albert Katakou, CARE Gulf of Guinea