

FORUM INTERNATIONAL
**ENSEMBLE VERS
LES CHÂÎNES D'APPROVISIONNEMENT VERTES
AU NIVEAU MONDIAL**
UNE INITIATIVE DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIERE

INTERNATIONAL FORUM
**TOGETHER TOWARDS
GLOBAL GREEN SUPPLY CHAINS**
A FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY INITIATIVE

共建全球绿色供应链国际论坛
-来自林产工业的倡议-

22-25 oct. 2019
SHANGHAI & HUZHOU, CHINA

DISCOURS / SPEECHES

22 Oct. 2019 : Cérémonie d'ouverture / *Opening Ceremony*

**atibt**

THE LEADING AUTHORITY ON TROPICAL TIMBER

In English

Mr. Robert Hunink, President of ATIBT

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Colleagues,
Friends,

Nǐ hǎo

On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of ATIBT, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this conference which is co-organized together with the ITTO, GGSC and CTWPDA.

This conference is rather unique in that it brings together various stakeholders, with diverse interests, but with a common goal: how to ensure that the planet's tropical rainforests continue to hold their values today, tomorrow and for years to come.

Tropical rainforests have multiple economic values: for governments, because they generate taxes; for the private sector as the availability of raw material allows them their ongoing investments; for the population in terms of socio-economic development; and for organizations that manage national parks and create eco-tourism.

Apart from these immediate economic values, tropical rainforests can have an important function as carbon sinks and therefore contribute to climate change mitigation. They are also home to numerous plant-, tree- and animal species; some of which, according to research, are at risk. And, last but not least, these forests provide shelter and nutrition for forest-based communities.

Today all these values are threatened particularly by the destruction of existing forests for the creation of large-scale mono-culture plantations, industrial mining, shifting cultivations, fuel wood collection and.....illegal logging.

When it comes to combatting illegal logging, the responsibility for law enforcement and governance lies first and foremost with the governments in wood producing countries. I am aware that this demands significant resources, both human and financial, but governments need to realize that illegal logging practices create unfair competition and is driving those companies that **do** operate according to sustainable forest management practices out of business. This, in turn, has serious socio-economic consequences.

However, in timber consuming countries worldwide, authorities need to also increase their efforts to combat the import of illegal timber. Illegal timber seriously harms the image of our entire industry and end-users promoting the use of responsibly produced timber, including FSC or PEFC certified, are seeing a decrease in the demand of tropical wood.

Ladies and gentlemen, our organization, ATIBT, stands for a sustainable, ethical and legal tropical wood industry, where wood is promoted as a renewable natural resource and an essential commodity for socio-economic development in producer countries. ATIBT also seeks an open and transparent dialogue with all stakeholders in our industry in order to promote responsible forest management practices.

Even though our organization has existed for more than sixty-five years, we do not pretend that the process of moving from unsustainable practices to sustainable forest management is an easy one, nor do we claim that we have solutions for all the challenges tropical forests are facing today. However, we are anxious to work towards achieving a global green supply chain for the benefit of all, and therefore ATIBT is ready to share our experience and know-how and welcomes an exchange with **ALL** other forest operators in Africa.

At ATIBT we believe that we can learn from one another not only in the area of forest management and certification, but also about such things as how to improve timber yields during the production process; added value options and, research and development for applications in the so-called lesser known species.

The timber sector in Africa is benefitting from many projects that ATIBT as implementing agency, and financially supported by a number of donors, has launched in the interest of better forest management practices. ATIBT would like to welcome any Asian forest operator who subscribes to our values to join our organization and benefit from these projects. But these research projects that would also need the cooperation and support of Asian operators.

The recommendations of the recently held *"First Africa - China International Workshop on Forestland Governance, Investments and Sustainability"* are encouraging. The large number of Chinese participants that came to Cameroon's capital Yaoundé for this workshop shows that there is concern in China about

governance issues and the future of tropical rainforests. We would therefore hope that China is ready to take on a leading role when it comes to these issues and also actively supports what we want to achieve with this conference.

And who knows, our common initiative of *“Working Together Towards Global Green Supply Chains”* might even make the agenda of the important COP 15 Biodiversity Conference that is to take place next year in Kunming, here in China.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is still not too late to improve forest governance, change habits and practices and combat climate change but, the clock is ticking. Business as usual is not an option and therefore this conference has to come with recommendations of how to achieve global green supply chains and what concrete commitments need to be made.

Now therefore let's all get to work and, to quote the famous Chinese philosopher Confucius, **“Think of tomorrow, as the past can't be mended”**.

Thank you - Xiè Xiè