



As president of the ATIBT, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Executive Committee and our dedicated staff to ATIBT's Forum 2017.

Our Forum will be held this year **in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), from 4-6 March, in conjunction with the Dubai WoodShow (7-9 March)**

Dubai, **a strategic business location in the Middle East and acting as gateway for the entire region, will be hosting the EXPO 2020.** One of the key pillars of this major event is ***sustainability*** - *how to use resources without compromising the ability of the planet to sustain future generations.*

As **ATIBT stands for a sustainable, ethical and legal tropical wood industry**, where wood is promoted as a renewable natural resource and essential to socio-economic development of producing countries, it is hardly surprising that the organisers of the Dubai WoodShow reached out to our organisation and invited us to hold our Forum in this city.

Holding the Forum in conjunction with the Dubai WoodShow, gives all our members an **excellent opportunity to strengthen already existing commercial contacts or enter into new business relationships.** It will also be a unique **chance for our African producer members to introduce and promote the so-called *lesser known timber species (LKTS)***, to be used as building material in the various pavilions of the EXPO 2020.

ATIBT's members are very pleased to know that **the Dubai authorities have stated that the use of timber in the EXPO 2020 building projects must be of verified legal origin.** A clear acknowledgment vis-à-vis ATIBT's producer members of their efforts as regards responsible forest management practices.

As regards this year's Forum, we believe that we have managed to put together an interesting agenda. The Forum, with as **theme "*Tropical Forests, timber and so much more*"**, is covering the very topics our industry is faced with today, but also will be facing tomorrow !

Following the feedback we received from you after our last Forum, we have requested that this time presentations should be shorter in order to allow more time for questions, answers and debate. **I therefore would encourage all of you to actively participate in the panel discussions.**

I also trust that the interaction between the participants of our Forum and those of the Dubai WoodShow will be constructive for you and lead to more, or new, business opportunities.

Finally, I would like to wish you an excellent stay in **Dubai, a thriving and most fascinating global city.**

Robert Hunink
President of ATIBT