



## ATIBT INTERNATIONAL FORUM: AN UNUSUAL EDITION MEETS EXPECTATIONS



The Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux (or International Tropical Timber Technical Association) held its 20th International Forum from March 4 – 6.

This year's theme was "Tropical forest: Timber, and so much more". About 130 delegates from the tropical timber industry gathered in Dubai, the emblematic city of the United Arab Emirates and host of the Forum.

Since its launch in 1982 in Rome, the Forum has travelled around the world but has never been held in the Middle East.

Dubai may come across as an unusual destination for a forestry-related conference but its prospects are apparent.

Although timber processing companies are few and far in between, the region sees a lot of international trade due to its exceptional geography. As a business and logistics hub, it is easily accessible to the Gulf States, Iran, Pakistan, East Africa. Dubai is also the host city of the region's most prominent woodworking trade show, Dubai WoodShow, of which is also a partner event of the ATIBT International Forum.

There is also real interest from the authorities for legality and timber certification issues. At the opening of the Forum, the Ministry of the Economy of the United Arab Emirates, presented the country's commitment to the environment. Her Excellency Mrs Estelle Ondo, Minister of Forest Economy, Fisheries and Environment, as well as Mrs Lucie Berger, from the Delegation of the European Union in Abu Dhabi also addressed the Forum.

The Forum also brought experts from the public and private sectors, academia and research, as well as civil society and NGOs from both supplier and consuming countries. The Forum's five sessions included:

1. The future of the tropical forest and its population
2. Training in the timber profession
3. Legality, certification, global warming and responsible purchase of timber
4. Logistics, challenges and opportunities
5. African and Middle East timber market in the world

Following the Forum, the ATIBT and its members were present at the Dubai WoodShow to address questions on the association's activities and certification issues on tropical timber.

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