



Dear Members,

Although somewhat late, let me begin by wishing you a very happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

In 2017 we enjoyed not only a growth in ATIBT's membership base (twenty new members) but also diversity in the nature of new members - all appreciating the role ATIBT is playing in the promotion of sustainably produced tropical timber. I am pleased to report that our organisation now has some 130 members.

Throughout the year ATIBT continued to work very closely with its donors on a number of existing projects, while some new projects were proposed. These projects vary from studying forest dynamics, FLEGT, certification, promotion of lesser known timber species (LKTS) and marketing activities. We are very grateful for the financial contribution of our donors as their ongoing support enables ATIBT to further promote sustainable forest management practices and all that this entails.

In March 2017, we held our biannual Forum in Dubai in conjunction with the Dubai WoodShow, where ATIBT was able to showcase the organisation. Local authorities took a keen interest in our activities and were particularly interested to learn about one of our core values: the trade in legally produced tropical timber. We were very pleased to see many new members attending the Forum and as we always strive to improve the format of this meeting, we encourage you all to forward ideas for our next Forum in 2019.

In October, ATIBT's staff and a number of representatives of FSC certified companies in the Congo Basin, attended the FSC General Assembly which was held in Vancouver. During the previous FSC General Assembly, motion 65, (IFL's - Intact Forest Landscapes), was adopted but this motion never took into consideration the economic viability of companies, or the possible social consequences for the population. ATIBT therefore tabled motion 34 which called for a regional assessment of the overall short and long-term impacts (environmental, social, and economic) of the management and protection measures linked with the implementation of Motion 65. Motion 34 was overwhelmingly adopted and we will see to it that the assessment gets underway as soon as possible.

In November, ATIBT's collective new brand, "Fair&Precious", was launched during a conference in Paris. Those who carry the brand, FSC certified member companies of ATIBT, have to adhere to ten specific commitments in order to be able to use the brand. The main objective is to promote FSC certified tropical timber (and PAFC when this certification will be implemented in the Congo basin) in general and to introduce the so-called lesser known species in particular. To learn more about Fair&Precious and the initiatives, please visit the website: www.fair-and-precious.org.

A more detailed overview of all activities can be found in ATIBT's 2017 Activity Report; a report which will be published and sent to our members towards the end of March.

During the coming months we shall start the second phase of PPECF, a program that covers various activities related to certified forest operations. In addition, ATIBT will introduce vocational training initiatives and go to market with the Fair&Precious brand.

As was discussed in Vancouver with the FSC social chamber members, ATIBT and Greenpeace International have agreed to meet twice a year in order to improve the dialogue between the two organisations and thus contribute to a better understanding of each other's point of view. Such a regular dialogue is already existing with WWF, FSC International and PEFC.

In June, ATIBT will be organising the next Racewood event in Gabon in conjunction with the Gabon WoodShow. Our General Assembly is planned for 29th May in Nantes, just before the Carrefour International du Bois (30 May-1st June).

Other events will be communicated to you through the publication of our regular Newsletters and/or Flash Info. You can, of course, also find all the information on ATIBT's website: www.atibt.org.

I wish you all a successful year and look forward to seeing you during the General Assembly.

Yours,

Robert Hunink
President ATIBT