

# ITTO-FAO International conference on tropical plywood

**Paul VANTOMME**

International Tropical Timber Organization  
(ITTO) Directory  
International Organizations Center - 5F  
Pacifico-Yokohama  
1-1-1 Minato-Mirai, Nishi-ku  
Yokohama 220-0012,  
Japan



Opening ceremony. Photo C. Mayura.

The ITTO-FAO International conference on tropical plywood took place in Beijing, China (26–28 September 2005), and was attended by close to 200 participants—the vast majority business people—from 31 countries around the world.

The conference proved a great opportunity to make new business contacts and to get updated on the latest trends in tropical plywood production and trade worldwide, with a particular focus on the emerging role of China and why it is competing so effectively. Key presentations were made and panel discussions held on global issues affecting the tropical plywood sector, including production and trade data, emerging trade barriers (including non-tariff trade barriers—nttbs), technology developments, the raw-material outlook, and the challenging corporate responsibilities of plywood manufacturing.

## Recommendations

Conference participants agreed to a series of recommendations that were made in the conference's final statement. It urged ITTO to:

- Prepare and help implement national strategies to strengthen the development of tropical plywood industries by, for example, reviewing sustainable sources of wood supply, including from natural forests, plantations and imports from other tropical timber producers, and analysing the private sector's investment opportunities for improving tropical plywood manufacturing and trade.
- Enhance the capacities of tropical plywood-producing countries in: implementing sustainable forest management in natural tropical forests and developing appropriate policies/incentives for plantation development; developing and providing relevant incentives for increasing product quality and for producing more added-value products; knowledge of and compliance with market requirements, such as quality standards, nttbs, procurement policies and other market access impediment mechanisms; promoting the use, image and sustainable trade of tropical plywood.

- Assist tropical plywood producer and traders' associations to strengthen their ability to service their members by: improved information-sharing and training on appropriate processing technologies and market information and intelligence; helping tropical producers' associations to increase their lobbying capacity and strategies to advance sustainable forest industry development; promoting initiatives, such as the development of appropriate codes of conduct, to help tropical plywood producer and trading companies to participate actively on the international stage to improve their environmental and social corporate responsibilities; promote tropical plywood produced from sustainable sources in the international markets, through, among other things; the review of procurement policies and the facilitation of mutual recognition and market access considering discussions under the Doha Agenda of the World Trade Organization.
- In collaboration with other agencies and tropical plywood trade associations, assisting and facilitating discussions and initiatives between tropical plywood producers and consumers to address price volatility, price insurance options and to remediate the lack of market transparency. One option would be to evaluate and reactivate, as appropriate, the listing of tropical plywood on the Shanghai Futures Exchange.
- Supporting producing countries to combat illegal logging and its related trade.
- Supporting the harmonisation of grading standards of tropical plywood among the markets.
- Enhance exchange of information at national, regional and global levels on tropical plywood production and trade between producers, traders and consumers by, among other things: strengthening Itto's Market Information Service; convening at regular intervals (every four years) an international conference on tropical plywood; convening expert meetings on specific technical issues; conducting in-depth market studies on tropical plywood in major consumer markets; conducting comparative studies on the production costs and technologies of tropical and non-tropical plywood in the major producer countries; undertaking projects, supporting national seminars and training sessions, and developing relevant publications in Itto's technical series, etc.; analyse and promote appropriate financing systems and ways of increasing (private-sector) conditional investment in tropical forests and tropical plywood production.
- In collaboration with the World Customs Organization and relevant trade associations review the Harmonized System Chapter 44.12 with the aim of revising the listing of tropical species and better defining tropical plywood so as to improve trade statistics.
- In collaboration with relevant agencies (including Fao) and countries, support and improve ongoing forest resource assessment and forest management assessments, especially to qualify and quantify the available timber supply for industrial uses and future trends.
- Make the materials presented at the conference and its proceedings (including translations of a summary of the conference and its recommendations in Chinese, Spanish and French) widely available.



Participants learning about air drying of core sheets at an Hangzhou plywood mill.  
Photo P. Vantomme.



Participants learning about the new Chinese plywood grading standards at a Beijing wholesales market.  
Photo P. Vantomme.

## Proceedings and contacts

Proceedings of the conference are under preparation and will be published soon. In the meantime, the conference program, presentations and the summary and conclusions are available at [www.itto.or.jp](http://www.itto.or.jp)

For more information or to receive a copy of the proceedings, contact:

- Paul Vantomme, Assistant Director Forest Industries, ITTO Secretariat, [vantomme@itto.or.jp](mailto:vantomme@itto.or.jp)
- [fi@itto.or.jp](mailto:fi@itto.or.jp); fax 81-45-223 1111