

**Statement of Ms Sheam Satkuru, Executive Director of International Tropical Timber
Organization (ITTO)
at the high-level segment of UNFCCC COP 28:**

Your Excellencies, Honorable Ministers and distinguished delegates,

The centrality of tropical forests for both mitigation and adaptation cannot be overstated. If we continue disincentivizing forest conservation, we will never succeed in limiting the damage caused by climate change and changing land use.

Sustainably managed tropical forests hold essential nature-based solutions and should be vigorously pursued. They produce wood and non-wood forest products, act as a vast carbon sink, protect biodiversity, soil and water, filter the air, prevent land degradation and desertification, and reduce the risk of floods, droughts and other disasters.

Sustainable forest management ensures that forest carbon stocks are maintained long term by avoiding degradation. Timber is one of the most environmentally friendly materials we have. Sustainable harvesting of forests is not deforestation and the sustainable use of wood products increases global carbon storage. Generating sustainable revenue from forests will ensure forests are retained and not fall victim to other competing land uses.

To fight climate change and transform our economies, we need to urgently invest in sustainable tropical forest management.

Investing in sustainable tropical forestry is not just an option but an immediate imperative for our planet's future and for the livelihoods of forest-dependent peoples.

The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), established in 1986, is committed to catalyzing sustainable tropical forest management. Through strategic partnerships with governments, private sector and civil society, we empower our members and local communities to sustainably manage and benefit from forests, with a special focus on women.

We aim for integrated management that sequesters and stores carbon, nurtures thriving ecosystems, and enables sustainable use, contributing to carbon-neutral and more circular bio-economies.

Tropical forests offer a vital pathway toward a climate-resilient future. ITTO will continue advancing sustainable tropical forest management for climate-change mitigation and adaptation. We urge all stakeholders to work with us in championing sustainable tropical forest management and to ramp up investment in them. Thank you.