

Closing Statement of CSAG to UN conference on Re-negotiation of ITTA 1994
30 th July 2004.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The current negotiations of the successor agreement to ITTA 1994 are taking place at a time when the questions being raised about the survival of tropical forests and the trade and livelihoods connected with it are of greater gravity than ever before. In this context, this re-negotiation represents an historical opportunity. It is an opportunity that needs to be fully grasped to usher in a policy and management regime that would put the world's tropical forests on to sustainable pathways, clean up the trade, and ensure the rights and livelihoods of millions of Indigenous People and forest-dependent residents.

It is in this context that we, the Civil Society Advisory Group, have advocated five principles that would help in realizing the objectives of the successor ITTA to the emerging realities of tropical forests. In brief, the new agreement must rededicate itself to the achievement of its primary mission: the sustainable management of tropical forests. In achieving this mission, the new agreement needs to fully recognise the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples and forest communities, who have emerged as key allies in achieving the objective of sustainable management of tropical forests. They constitute the second largest ownership of tropical forests and are by far the largest investors in their conservation. Incorporating these people's rights, interests and roles in the new agreement will also be in keeping with the commitments made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by all those who are present here. The interest of Indigenous Peoples and forest communities and interests of those involved in the legal trade in tropical forest products are, however, seriously jeopardised by illegal harvesting and trade. The new agreement must clearly deal with this problem. Tropical forests and markets are in transition and the new agreement also needs to be flexible enough to exploit the emerging opportunities of trade in other tropical forest products and services.

We are aware of the complex nature of financial arrangements that are being negotiated. Whatever arrangements the distinguished delegates arrive at must contain provisions that enable our key allies – the Indigenous Peoples and forest communities – to directly access finances from ITTO. Similarly, the policy and project work of ITTO must encompass the new reality of community managed forests and enterprises, which are poised to alter the markets of tropical forest products and services in a major way in the coming decade.

Finally, we remain concerned about the degree to which representatives of civil society will be able to participate in the renegotiations from this point onwards. We sincerely believe that if we are to fulfill our role as constructive commentators and advisers, we must be able to actively participate, and not simply attend and observe.