"CRITERIA & INIDCATORS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF AFRICAN FORESTS"

One of ITTO's most important policy work elements has been to develop criteria and indicators (C&I) for monitoring, assessing and reporting on the implementation of sustainable forest management (SFM). ITTO created the world's first set of seven SFM criteria, specifically for tropical forests, in 1992. Since then, the ITTO C&I have continued to be refined and improved, with the most recent version published in 2005.

By identifying the main elements of SFM, C&I provide means of assessing progress towards it. Many ITTO producer member countries have adopted the ITTO C&I or developed their own sets based on the ITTO C&I. They use them in monitoring, assessing and reporting on forest management at the national level and for fulfilling their international reporting obligations. For example, most Central and West African countries have adopted *Principles, criteria and indicators for the sustainable management of African natural tropical forests* (the 'ITTO/ATO PCI'), a regional set of C&I developed jointly by ITTO and the African Timber Organization in 2004.

For the application of the 'ITTO/ATO PCI' extensive capacity building has been provided in Africa. The project has been divided into three phases to facilitate funding. Phases I and II are complete; Phase III is under implementation.

Selected achievements under the project to date include:
- harmonization with the standards set by the global Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes in Gabon;
- In Ghana, the ITTO C&I and the ATO/ITTO PCI have been used in the Forestry Commission's forest management manuals and guidelines, providing a cornerstone for natural forest management;
- In all African ITTO producer member countries, training has been provided to over 500 government officials, company executives, forest operators and community leaders on applying the ATO/ITTO PCI in the field and using them as a basis for national-level monitoring, assessment, auditing and reporting of forest management.

Ongoing activities under this project seek to:
- ensure that all ITTO African producer member countries have operational sets of national PCI (including for planted forests where relevant);
- undertake audits of forest management using the national PCI sets in selected forest concessions in all ITTO African producer member countries;
- assist countries that express interest in attaining third party certification of forest management by supporting work to align national PCI sets with certification standards; and
- assist countries that express interest in implementing legality assurance initiatives (e.g. under EU FLEGT VPAs) to use their national PCI sets towards this objective.

The project collaborates extensively with other stakeholders in the region, including WWF's regional office for Africa which has co-funded activities in selected countries and participates regularly in project steering committees. Links have also been established with the Central African Forest Observatory (OFCA) and officials responsible for VPA negotiations in relevant countries.