

**ITTO Konferenz Bern, 07.06.2011**  
**Speech from Maya Graf, MP of Switzerland**

**Tropical Forest and Switzerland**

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Your excellencies,

Thank you very much to the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) for giving me the opportunity to say a few words on ITTO and the role of Switzerland as an ITTO donor.

As a Member of Parliament for the Greens, I have personally had a long-term interest in sustainable forest management and the conservation of forests. I am also proud to say that the forest belonging to our family's organic farm in my constituency has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council FSC.

In Switzerland, sustainability in forestry has a long tradition and it has been enshrined in the law in 1876 already. At the time, Switzerland's fragile alpine ecosystems had suffered a series of natural disasters which were caused by the non-sustainable use of the forests. Today, our natural forest area is greater than hundred years ago and a large part of the Swiss forests are community-managed and FSC-certified.

As we celebrate this year as the International Year of Forests, it is encouraging to see all of us assembled here in the name of the promotion of sustainable tropical forestry, and I think the ITTO's effort under the directorship of Emmanuel Ze Meka is commendable.

Nevertheless, I would also like to share with you that I am deeply worried about the ongoing massive tropical deforestation and its long-term social and environmental consequences.

25 years after the foundation of ITTO, there is no reason for complacency. We urgently need to reflect on the shortcomings and failures of ITTO in reaching its goals: the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forests.

In particular, there is a strong feeling with civil society that ITTO has lost a lot of credibility and relevance over the years due to its failure to properly address the numerous injustices and illegalities in the timber sector. Corruption and illegal logging are not only major obstacles to sustainable forestry but have in some places become major drivers of deforestation.

The example of Malaysia and its main timber-producing region, the state of Sarawak, could be highlighted because of today's presence of an indigenous delegation from Malaysia. After 30 years of intensive logging, Sarawak's indigenous communities have had little benefit from the timber sector but instead see their natural environment destroyed.

Where has all the timber money gone? A lot of it has gone into the pockets of Sarawak's head of government who has become a billionaire during his 30 years in power as the state's top public servant.

During all these years, the Sarawak government has defied ITTO's recommendations on sustainable logging, which were made following an ITTO mission to Sarawak in 1990.

If ITTO wishes to remain a relevant and credible player, it should urgently tackle the underlying causes and drivers of deforestation, including such unpleasent phenomena as timber-related corruption, the lack of good governance and the non-recognition of tenure rights of indigenous peoples.

There is no sustainability without the rule of law, without full transparence and without the proper recognition of native tenure rights over the forests. If the international community wishes to preserve the world's forests, much more must be done to reach that goal. The responsibility of ITTO and its member countries' governments in that respect is particularly high.

Thank you very much.