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One year on: where are we with the EUTR?

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## Towards a new cycle?

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The [Brazzaville Forum \[1\]](#) has proved to be a large event bringing together political authorities, tropical timber professionals, government representatives, managers and logistics providers into one single hub.

Initiated by Minister Henri Djombo, FAO, ATIBT and ITTO, the event has largely exceeded what they had hoped for. How?





*Brazzaville Forum: General view of the podium during the opening.*

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To begin with, **the Forum has taken place against a backdrop of sustained efforts**, starting a few months prior to it with interviews and consultations and culminating in a major opportunity for sharing viewpoints and objections. Then, **after the Forum, we have witnessed an increasing number of exchanges on transparency, governance, local wood processing, professional training, infrastructure development and the evolution of employment [2]**. A breath of fresh air was let in.

### **Changing in scope: from ‘Forum’ to ‘Cycle’**

There’s a **whole different context in Africa**. Independence is now 50 years old, in some countries even older. A new generation is taking power. In Africa, growth is no longer a vain hope – it’s there, in front of us, for all to see. The demographic dividend (given the increase in life expectancy) but also the change in lifestyle (urbanization) and consumer habits (mobile

phones, Internet...) firmly anchor Africa in globalization. **An innovative way of doing things is emerging in Africa, resting, so far, on its remarkable mineral resources.**

Now, in this **global paradigm shift, forest industries and their logistics whereabouts change, too:**

- While the **GDP contribution of the forest industry** in producing countries ranks low on a global scale, **in Central Africa it becomes a leading source of employment**, especially in rural regions;
- **Forest concessions play a key role** when it comes to land-use planning and development;
- **Concessions may play a role as protected areas**, where the growing numbers of animal species show that habitat conservation is compatible with economic revenue;
- **Local sawnwood consumption** has already reached the volumes of sawnwood for export;
- **Fuelwood consumption** is on a steep rise;
- **Inter-regional trade is becoming more and more important** (Ghana towards Nigeria; Côte d'Ivoire towards Sahel – Congo and RDC etc.);
- **Containerisation of processed wood products** (sawnwood, kiln dried, planed timber etc.) **is developing more and more** and that applies to reaching Asia, too.



*Square edged planks, Cameroon*

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## The Brazzaville Forum: long-lasting factors

The changes we have just seen may lead to rethink the organisation of the industry:

- **Rethink** the offer from a local point of view: the needs of African clients must be satisfied;
- **Work** on the image of tropical timber – 'Made in Africa' could turn into a quality label in terms of environment, equitable working conditions and contribution to employment;
- **Change** trade and transport of forest products (imports et exports) in West and Central Africa;
- **Keep** into account the strategies of specialised companies (maritime transport, maintenance, retailers, operators) in an international regulatory context becoming more and more binding [3];
- **Include** plantations adapted to different land types in the forest products offer available on the local market: fuelwood, construction wood, fruit trees, agroforestry;
- **Do not forget** flow reversals – European softwood will be increasingly exported to Africa.

**So, yes, we do stand at the dawn of a new cycle. How long will it last? Nobody knows!** 5 years, 8 years... 10 years or more, certainly. The previous cycle was the one of forest management and must have lasted a little over 10 years. **The Brazzaville Cycle will deal with changes in actors, products, flows, services offered by « foresters », as well as changes in the image of African tropical timber...** This new cycle seems much more ambitious than the previous one. It must accompany the deployment of African forestry innovations which, in turn, will increasingly place the Sub-saharan forest in the foreground, for the benefit of the national societies and economies.

**Future scenarios on tomorrow's strategies and after-tomorrow's economic spaces in West and Central Africa must be formulated.** The partner organizations who kicked off the Forum, one can't but hope, will turn into the leading advocates of this cycle – first and foremost, ATIBT.

[1] « Brazzaville Forum on the future of Congo Basin forests. A model for the creation of shared value », FAO, 2013.

[2] « Evolution of African tropical wood markets. Ethics and pragmatism for a sustainable development of forest resources », FAO, 2013.

[3] « Cadre Réglementaire et logistique internationale des bois : analyse du Règlement Bois de l'Union Européenne, In Alix Y. et Lacoste R., Logistique et transport des vracs, EMS pp. 403-431, 2013 ».