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Editor's Note: For copies of the press release, photographs and background materials, please visit: <http://www.tropicalforesttrust.com/media/londonmarch2007>

**Radio Stations for Remote Forest Communities Deep in the Congo Basin
Broadcast a New Era for Tropical Timber**

***Timber Company also Equips Non-literate Pygmy Groups with High-tech,
Handheld Mapping Devices to Enable the Protection of Sacred Forest Resources***

LONDON (23 March 2007)—This spring, construction is set to begin on a small radio station deep in the Congo Basin whose broadcasts will be controlled by non-literate, indigenous Pygmy communities and local farmers. It's the latest development in an unusual alliance that includes one of the world's largest African hardwood timber concerns and an independent nonprofit charity seeking new ways to fight illegal and destructive logging.

The Congo Basin is a 700,000 square mile tropical forest that sprawls across six countries and is the world's biggest tropical forest outside of the Amazon.

The station is to be built through the combined efforts of the Congolaise Industrielle des Bois or CIB, a subsidiary of Danish timber giant Dalhoff Larsen & Horneman Group (DLH), and the Tropical Forest Trust (TFT), an independent nonprofit international charity seeking to eliminate illegal and destructive tropical timber operations from commercial supply chains. Assistance also is being provided by the World Bank's Development Marketplace program, which has been alarmed by a rapid escalation of illegal logging throughout the Congo Basin.

The key purpose of the station, which will be situated in CIB's 1.3 million hectare timber operation in northern Congo-Brazzaville (Republic of Congo), is to give reclusive, indigenous Pygmy communities and farmers the ability to understand and influence the way CIB manages the forest.

"These radio stations respond to the challenge of including in the forest management process a group of hunter-gathers who are non-literate, who don't speak a European language, and who live in groups of 30 to 60 people dispersed in remote parts of the forest," said Jerome Lewis, an anthropologist from the London School of Economics and expert on Pygmy communities who has helped CIB and TFT develop a communications strategy.

Lewis is confident the indigenous groups can learn how to make use of the radio station. Already, they have successfully mastered specially designed GPS-enabled handheld computers to help TFT and CIB create a detailed map of their most vital natural and cultural resources, which are used by CIB with the groups' permission, to plan annual harvests.

Lewis worked with CIB and the UK's Helveta Ltd. in the development of touch-screen software for the handhelds that contains icons recognizable to Pygmy groups that correspond to various forest resources of interest, such as natural springs, cemeteries, places of spiritual significance, and medicinal trees they want to preserve.

Before any logging begins, Pygmy hunters in whose territory felling will occur take the handhelds with them as they walk through their forest. When they come upon an area important to their traditional livelihoods that they believe could be disturbed by logging operations—such as a large Sapelli tree prized for its edible caterpillars—they simply select the appropriate icon and the GPS system pinpoints and records the resource type, location, and date on the computer's hard drive.

After a formal negotiations process establishes consensus on key resources, CIB can incorporate the data from the handhelds into its harvesting maps to ensure that timber operations don't do damage to Pygmy resources. Areas deemed important by local communities are marked off with white paint as are trees identified as in need of preserving.

For CIB, supplying forest-dwelling hunter-gathers with such things as radio stations and portable mapping technology is not intended as charity. Rather, it is at the core a hard-nosed business decision: that the best way for timber companies to achieve long term, sustainable profitability in the Congo Basin is to develop and feed demand for tropical hardwoods harvested in ways that preserve the forest ecosystem and respect the rights of the people who live there.

"No one was sure if this kind of forest operation was possible in the Congo Basin, but we decided that if a company wants to be here for the long-term, sustainable forest management is the only way forward," said Lucas van der Walt, Environmental Manager for CIB. "We hope that these efforts will ultimately translate into a smarter, cost-effective and more profitable business."

CIB's push to reinvent its Congo operation began several years ago when it joined forces with several partners, including TFT, to begin the lengthy process of securing certification from the independent Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which has established comprehensive standards for what constitutes a sustainable forestry operation.

The TFT is a strong proponent of the FSC process and works with tropical timber concerns around the world, encouraging them to adopt the sustainable practices required to obtain FSC's approval. The effort plays into TFT's broader mission, which is to use the buying clout of large wood product retailers to create a viable market for tropical hardwoods harvested legally and sustainably.

For example, CIB's unprecedented efforts to bring Pygmy communities into the forest planning process were initiated in part to satisfy FSC certification standards that require the informed consent of local communities in decisions affecting their forests. CIB also had to show FSC that its logging activities would not irreparably harm the surrounding ecosystem, which is home to, among other things, significant populations of lowland gorillas and forest elephants.

CIB began its quest for certification in 2000 by dispatching over 100 employees who over two years walked five thousand kilometers of remote Congo forest, recording the age, location and species of more than a million trees, while cataloguing the diversity of forest wildlife and natural resources. CIB also worked with a variety of partners to better understand the environmental and social conditions of its forest concession. CIB then used this information to create a long-term strategic plan that can show how logging will occur for decades to come.

"We have a complete picture of the frequency, quality and densities of over 250 species of trees where other companies will just have a big map showing a lot of green," van der Walt said. "We can calculate the regeneration and mortality rates over time. We can then make logging decisions that allow us to selectively remove valuable timber with minimal impact on the forest."

"I think the CIB approach is a living, breathing example that timber production does not have to be synonymous with tropical forest destruction," said Scott Poynton, TFT's Executive Director. "What we hope to demonstrate with our work in the Congo and elsewhere is that there are rewards to be had for companies that do things the right way. Our members, who deal in hundreds of millions of dollars worth of products, are eager to form long-term business relationships with suppliers who provide wood from legal, sustainable forestry concerns."

About the Tropical Forest Trust

Established in 1999, the TFT is a nonprofit international charity seeking to transform the international trade in tropical timber and timber products into a force for forest conservation. TFT provides comprehensive information about the origin of all tropical wood in member wood products. TFT's Wood Control Systems track wood from the felling operation from the forest, to the factory and through every key stage of manufacture. Technologies like [TracElite](#) assure real-time monitoring and trace-back of the full supply chain of wood from the stump to the showroom. TFT also helps the forests improve their management and achieve FSC ([Forest Stewardship Council](#)) certification.

TFT members are based in Europe, North America, South East Asia, and New Zealand. They include more than 40 multi-national retail giants and small 'high street' retailers committed to purchasing only legally harvested timber. TFT is supported by membership fees and grants from foundations and individual donations. It has forged partnerships with governments, timber companies, and international organizations to expand the world's holdings of FSC-certified forests. For further information, visit: www.tropicalforesttrust.com.