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New Netherlands-China partnership to boost Africa's green development using bamboo

BEIJING-THE HAGUE, NOVEMBER 20, 2015. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China's State Forestry Administration and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) have announced that they are ready to open talks about starting a new partnership to stimulate bamboo business development in three African countries— to boost rural incomes, restore degraded landscapes, and combat climate change. This was announced today at a meeting in Beijing between Chinese and Netherlands officials, with representatives from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The potential for this multi-stakeholder partnership is inspired by the Agenda 2030, the worldwide consensus agreed in New York in September 2016, on promoting the Sustainable Development Goals.

This will be a 'south-south-north' business initiative. It links China's vast experience in developing bamboo resources for poverty alleviation and livelihoods development, with The Netherlands' bamboo sector expertise in areas such as production, marketing and standards, to benefit the development needs of Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

The partnership uses triangular south-south-north cooperation to stimulate green economic growth and international trade and investment between Europe, China, and East Africa. Says Jeroen Verheul, Ambassador at Large for Foreign Trade and International Development Cooperation: "The partnership develops pro-poor industrial value chains for bamboo in East Africa, and mobilizes Dutch and Chinese expertise to bring benefits to European and Chinese investors and consumers. A second objective is to restore degraded lands in Africa."

Vice Minister of the State Forestry Administration of China, Hon. Mr. Zhang Yongli comments: "We greatly appreciate the long-term support from the Government of the Netherlands to INBAR, and China looks forward to developing program collaboration with the Netherlands to promote global bamboo and rattan sector development through the INBAR platform. We are pleased that the Netherlands has agreed to develop the *'Bamboo Value Chains and Standardization in Africa'* project, together with the support of China and INBAR. This partnership will further promote Africa's bamboo industry development, and enable INBAR to fully realise its competitive advantage and provide better services to its Member States."

As part of the partnership, African partner countries will do assessments of their current bamboo resources, participate in study tours and benefit from capacity development to learn from China and The Netherlands industries. Each partner country will identify and develop value chains for their bamboo sectors.

Says INBAR Director General, Hans Friederich: "In Africa a small formal bamboo private sector is emerging, but the continent has much more potential to harness this resource to create jobs and vibrant national economic sectors. To progress, countries need significant technical, financial, and policy support to grow their markets. They also need to improve product quality to expand domestic business and tap export markets for high-value, high-profit bamboo products. This 'triangular cooperation' approach is a good example of how China and The Netherlands can combine their expertise to bring real, practical development benefits to African countries."

The partnership will transfer Chinese and Netherlands business know-how to the African partner countries. As the world's leader in bamboo processing and value chain development, China has supported African bamboo sector development for many years, and has much practical expertise to share with the African partner countries. China's innovations and policy support have seen its domestic bamboo sector grow from a subsistence activity in the 1980s, to a vast industry, currently worth some \$30 billion a year, employing 7.75 million people, and has restored over 3 million hectares of degraded land. Internationally, China leads bamboo export markets, accounting for over 60% of trade.

Under Dutch leadership, Europe plays a key role in driving recent bamboo sector development. The Netherlands is home to Europe's largest importer and distributor of bamboo products, Moso International. It also has a number of technical and civil society institutions – Delft University of Technology has expertise in Life cycle analysis and product design; Eindhoven University of Technology is specialized in bamboo construction and ISO standards development; Wageningen University works on bamboo fibre use; The Netherlands Standardization Institute NEN has a focus on bamboo flooring standardization for Europe; and Netherlands Development Organisation, SNV is active in bamboo value chain development in Africa. With this Dutch leadership, Europe has become the largest bamboo product importer, accounting for 38% of the total market, more than double that of the US (18%), the second largest importer.

Key activities:

- **Business development:** Survey and assessment of bamboo resources and value chains in East Africa, including business plan development, technology transfer and capacity building on bamboo resource management, processing, product design and marketing.
- **Investment promotion:** Investor and industry study tours and workshops; trade dialogues on policy, product custom codes and standards; capacity building for African National Standards Bureaus and private sector companies on bamboo standardization.
- **Landscape restoration:** Planting of bamboo on degraded lands; life cycle analysis and carbon accounting methodology development for industrial bamboo products; and climate financing developed for bamboo reforestation and afforestation projects in Africa and China, as well as durable bamboo products.

NOTES TO EDITORS

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR BAMBOO AND RATTAN

The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) is a multilateral development organization of 41 Member States for the promotion of bamboo and rattan. INBAR plays a unique role in supporting its members to find and demonstrate innovative ways of using bamboo and rattan to protect environments and biodiversity, and alleviate poverty. INBAR connects a global network of partners from the government, private, and not-for-profit sectors to define and implement a global agenda for sustainable development with bamboo and rattan.

www.inbar.int

The Netherlands Trade and development cooperation policy

More and more low- and middle-income countries are not only recipients of aid but also trade partners. The Netherlands government therefore encourages investment and trade activities in these countries. The combination trade and development cooperation forms the core of Dutch development cooperation policy. At international level, the Netherlands pursues 3 aims:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty ('getting to zero') in a single generation;
2. Achieve sustainable, inclusive growth worldwide, i.e. economic growth from which the poor also benefit;
3. Ensure success for Dutch companies abroad.

For more information on these aims, please see the policy document '[A World to Gain: a New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment](#)'.