



**For Immediate Release**

## **Sustainable US Hardwood: The Timeless Yet Modern Choice For Interior Design**

### ***AHEC 15<sup>th</sup> Southeast Asia and Greater China Convention opens in Chengdu***

**Chengdu, CHINA**, June 17, 2010 – The American Hardwood Export Council's (AHEC) 15th Southeast Asia and Greater China Convention, supported by Chengdu Furniture Industries Chamber of Commerce, Chengdu Interior Decoration Association and CIID Chengdu, opens here tomorrow. Themed "Sustainable US Hardwood: The Timeless Yet Modern Choice For Interior Design", the convention brings together over 500 delegates including traders, manufacturers and designers to exchange information and opinions on design, manufacturing and latest issues related to the development and applications of sustainable US hardwoods in interior, architectural and furniture design and manufacturing.

Sichuan, especially the provincial Chengdu, has been the financial, economic, manufacturing and logistics hub for Western and Southwestern China which emerges as a strong economic engine for China. Chengdu's home furnishing and interior decoration industry has rapidly expanded over the past 10 years and now the industry size is approximately RMB5 billion annually. "With a concentration of over 3,000 furniture and flooring factories, Chengdu is the ideal city to host this year's convention," said John Chan, AHEC Regional Director for Southeast Asia and Greater China.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, China has become the largest importer of American hardwood products, surpassing the European Union in both value and volume in 2009. In the first quarter of 2010, China's imports of US hardwood lumber valued at US\$77.34 million, increasing 145 percent from the same period in 2009, corresponding to an increase of 136 percent in volume. While Hong Kong and Taiwan both registered double-digit growth with increases of 52 percent and 41 percent respectively. "With China's steady economic growth and rising standard of living, more consumers have access to a sophisticated lifestyle and are exploring new furniture styles. The diversity, sustainability, versatility and aesthetic appeal of US hardwoods are well suited to match Chinese consumer's refined taste and can meet growing demand in environmentally friendly architectural and interior design," said Orn Gudmundsson, Chairman of AHEC.

The first-quarter statistics also finds strong rebound of US hardwoods export in several major Asia markets: Japan grew by 21 percent in value and 22 percent in volume, whereas Vietnam grew by 187 percent in value and 183 percent in volume as demand of hardwoods picked up after almost two years of recession.

The commitment of the Chengdu government in developing Chengdu into an exemplified World Modern Green City has led to a new era for the development of commercial, residential, hotel and hospitality buildings in the city. "AHEC can best serve Chengdu in achieving its goal of becoming 'A World Modern Green City' by providing the best sustainable, environment friendly hardwood resources available in the world," said Michael Snow, Executive Director of AHEC, "US hardwoods is well suited to the fast-growing China market for interior decoration and furniture as it provides a consistent and reliable source of high quality wood products from one of the world's most diverse and sustainable forest systems."

According to the IHS Global Insight Construction Services, China has 42 billion square meters of building stock and will be growing with a rate of 2 billion square meters of new buildings per year. It is forecast that China will account for nearly 50 percent of the world's new building construction by 2015.

Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (formerly Ministry of Construction) is enforcing new national standards for green building development, including the introduction of "Green Building Design Label for design of buildings" and "Green Building Label for operational efficiency". "This opens up enormous potential for US hardwoods as timber and wood based materials have excellent environmental performance and are often better than that of alternative materials. The high quality US hardwoods can be an important contribution to achieving sustainable production in China," said Rupert Oliver, Director, Forest Industries Intelligence Ltd.

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### **About American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC)**

AHEC is headquartered in Washington, DC, USA and is the leading trade association driving market development programs for the US hardwood industry. The AHEC Southeast Asia and Greater China (SEA & GRCH) office was opened in Hong Kong in 1992 and its Shanghai branch office was opened in 2002 to better serve the needs of mainland China. AHEC SEA & GRCH oversees nine Asian markets including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. US hardwood is a renewable resource as under the well-managed US forestry system, its perpetual production is ensured. For more details, please visit AHEC Southeast Asia & Greater China Office website: [www.ahec-china.org](http://www.ahec-china.org) or [www.ahec-seasia.org](http://www.ahec-seasia.org)

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