

The Flegt

Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade

Newsletter

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GOVERNMENT DRAGGED TO COURT OVER 'UNLAWFUL' SPECIAL PERMIT ISSUANCE



© Sally Obed Owusu-Addai (Plaintiff)

A Ghanaian citizen has taken legal action against the Government of Ghana, praying the High Court to declare, among others that, all “special permits” or “administrative permits” or “ministerial permits” involving the grant of a right to exploit the timber resources of Ghana granted without Parliamentary ratification are null and void, illegal and ineffective.

Mr. Obed Owusu-Addai, the Plaintiff, is also seeking a declaration that the interpretation given to section 20(2) of ACT 547 by the Ministers of Lands and Natural Resources and the Forestry Commission that purports to allow the issuance of such commercial timber rights without recourse to Parliamentary ratification, is erroneous and unconstitutional.

Addressing the media in

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LOGGERS WITHOUT PROCESSING MILLS TRAINED ON FLEGT LEGALITY

Two separate two-day training on 'Compliance with Timber Harvesting Operations, Transport and fiscal obligation' have been organized for loggers within the Akim Oda, New-Edubiase, Bekwai, Juaso, Nkwawie, Cape Coast, Dunkwa, Assin Fosu, Tarkwa and Takoradi forest districts of Ghana.

Organized by the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF), with funding from the FAO under the FAO EU FLEGT Programme, the training comes as part of the NDF project, “FLEGT COMPLIANCE IN Ghana; Building the Capacity of Loggers without processing Mills”.

Until the training, the role of loggers who do not own processing mills towards the successful implementation of Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) appeared to have been under emphasized. >>> Continue on Page 2



© Sally Sokoban Wood Village

LACK OF SAFETY AT SOKOBAN WOOD VILLAGE WORRYING

A visit to the Sokoban Wood Village by the Women in Forestry Group has revealed a total disregard for personal safety by traders in the market.

This was of great concern to Madam Doreen Asumang-Yeboah, the team leader of the group, in charge of gender and community rights, who called for immediate action to change the trend. >>> Continue on Page 8

FIAG HOSTS IVORIAN DELEGATION IN FOREST CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP



© FIAG Mr. Gustav Adu, Director of Operations, FIAG (third right) in a group picture with Ivorian Delegation

The Chairman of the Governing Council of the Forest Industries Association of Ghana (FIAG), Mr. Richard Nsenkyire, has reiterated the need for the West Africa sub-region to coordinate to conserve their forests in the various countries.

Mr. Nsenkyire, who made this call in Kumasi when FIAG hosted a six-member delegation from Ivory Coast, made up of leaders of various wood users, artisans and

manufacturers' associations, noted that the similarities of the situations in the two countries and the consequences of actions in one area on the other, called for loser collaboration for the conservation of our forests.

"We have a lot in common and what happens in one country, affects another country, so we need a stronger partnership to overcome our challenges by sharing experiences and learning from each other," Mr. Nsenkyire

told the delegation.

At a working session where representatives of FIAG met with the delegation, Mr. Gustav Adu who is the Director of Operations recounted how the deliberations of ten trade associations that culminated to the formation of FIAG has come a long way to become a strong voice for industry in the sector.

He assured Ivory Coast of Ghana's continuous support to ensure the good

practices that have brought Ghana thus far in the FLEGT-VPA processes, are replicated in the West African country.

"Our doors are always open to you; don't hesitate to call on us at any time because deforestation in your country is deforestation here. The world is global so we need to build synergies to promote our common good," Mr. Adu stated.

For his part, Mr. Cyrille Komgouep, leader of the delegation and Project Director of AVSI, a Civil Society Organization that covers many sectors in Ivory Coast, expressed his country's gratitude to FIAG and all facilitators of the five-day trip, disclosing that it has been a very revealing experience.

He assured that the lessons learnt would be implemented in Ivory Coast, expressing optimism that, things are likely to change when they start using the Ghana experience.

The delegation visited the Ashaiman Wood Market in Accra, the Artisans' Village in Aburi, the Sokoban Wood Village in Kumasi to learn about how they source the raw materials and their good practices.

They also visited a group of Civil Society

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LOGGERS WITHOUT PROCESSING MILLS TRAINED ON FLEGT LEGALITY

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Coupled with the shortfall in the supply of raw materials and entrenched by the high demand for logs, these loggers paid little attention, if any, to FLEGT legality requirements. As a result, many of the loggers without sawmills had little understanding and appreciation of the critical legality requirements. However, the ultimate success of FLEGT implementation in Ghana demands the active compliance with legality compliance at all stages of the timber supply chain in Ghana.

The aim of the training was therefore to equip the loggers with knowledge to comply with their obligations as stated in the Ghana VPA-FLEGT legality Standards. As part of the training, infographic guide on harvesting operations and transport requirements of the VPA-FLEGT was produced and disseminated to the loggers.



Some participants expressed their joy while undergoing the training and acquiring valuable knowledge to aid them in their work.

"This training has helped me to know how to work within the consigned

compartment and keep the area of harvest clean," one of them said.

"This training has added up to my experience gained over twenty-five years in the timber business. It has taught me how to apply and acquire a concession to harvest legal timber and educated me on how to harvest timber in the forest-fringed communities in peace with the traditional authorities and the community members," another elated participant stated.

Ending the training, the Director of Operations for NDF, Mr. Glen Asomaning was optimistic the impact of the training would soon be felt by downstream millers who purchase the logs from these loggers to enable the millers obtain the requisite documentation associated with the licensing.

Source: Nature and Development Foundation

GOVERNMENT DRAGGED TO COURT OVER 'UNLAWFUL' SPECIAL PERMIT ISSUANCE

>>> *Continued from Front Page*

Accra, he made it clear that, he supports Government's quest to develop Ghana through the utilization of natural resources to raise capital for development.

However, this action has been necessitated by the need for the utilization of Ghana's timber recourses "to be done in accordance with established laws and procedures as provided for in Articles 268 (1) of the 1992 Constitution, the Timber Resources Management Act, 1998 (ACT 547) as amended by Timber Resources Management Act, 2002 (ACT 617) and the Timber Resources Management and Legality Licensing Regulation, 2017 (L.I 2254).

"The combined effect of the provisions in these laws" Mr. Owusu-Addai stated, "demands that the allocation of rights to engage in commercial timber logging be granted through the issuance of Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs) either Large Scale or Small Scale signed on behalf of the President by the Minister responsible for Lands and Natural Resources. These TUCs when duly signed are further subject to parliamentary ratification."

He contends that the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Forestry Commission over the years have and continue to allocate rights for the commercial logging of timber in a form and manner alien, unknown and in breach of the laws on the grant of commercial timber

rights.

While commending Hon. Inusah Fuseini (Former MP and Minister) who during his era acknowledged the "illegalities" and decided not to issue such permits., and the current Minister, Hon. Samuel Abu Jinapor (MP) who within the first 100 days of his tenure issued a written directive to the Forestry Commission to cease the issuance of these permits, he believes that "a court declaration will strengthen the Minister's resolve in ensuring sustainable management of our timber and other natural resources."

His action is to get "an order restraining the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources and the Forestry Commission from entering into any transaction, contract or undertaking involving the grant of a right or concession for the exploitation of commercial timber rights without Parliamentary ratification." And, it is also to get "Any other orders consequential to the enforcement of the provisions in article 268(1) of the Constitution 1992 of the Republic of Ghana."

Story by Communication Team

For Immediate Release

All Media Houses

NOTICE OF CIVIL ACTION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA ON THE CONTINUOUS ISSUANCE OF "SPECIAL PERMITS" AS TIMBER RIGHTS CONTRARY TO THE CONSTITUTION

Today, 1st July, 2021, I Obed Owusu-Addai exercising my right as a citizen and also as an active member of Civil Society Coalition working in the natural resources sector involved in the protection of forests and the environment, have instructed my lawyers to initiate a court action against the Government of Ghana aimed at restoring the clarity in the regime for the grant of commercial timber rights. As required by law, we have served the Attorney General the mandatory 30 days' NOTICE of our intentions to bring a civil action on this matter.

I want to put on record that I support Government's quest to develop Ghana through the utilization of natural resources to raise capital for development. However, it is my contention that this utilization must be done in accordance with established laws and procedures as provided for in Articles 268 (1) of the 1992 Constitution, the Timber Resources Management Act, 1998 (ACT 547) as amended by Timber Resources Management Act, 2002 (ACT 617) and the Timber Resources Management and Legality Licensing Regulation, 2017 (L.I 2254). The combined effect of the provisions in these laws demands that the allocation of rights to engage in commercial timber logging be granted through the issuance of Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs) either Large Scale or Small Scale signed on behalf of the President by the Minister responsible for Lands and Natural Resources. These TUCs when duly signed are further subject to parliamentary ratification.

These prescriptions of law on the grant of commercial timber rights are meant to ensure a sustainable utilization of the forest resources of the country and to prevent the fragmentation of our forest reserves. Ultimately, these provisions ensure that while the State derives the necessary revenues from the exploitation of timber resources, the environment is also protected. It is my contention that the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Forestry Commission over the years have and continue to allocate rights for the commercial logging of timber in a form and manner alien, unknown and in breach of the laws on the grant of commercial timber rights. These rights granted in flagrant breach of the laws are known variously as "special permits", "ministerial letters or permits" or "administrative permits".

This action I have instituted today has become necessary because of the practice of various Ministers of Lands and Natural Resources and Chief Executives of the Forestry Commission, who issued commercial timber rights in the form of "Special Permits", "Ministerial Letters or Permits", "Administrative Permits" among others without adherence to the dictates of the law. I must however at this point commend the

decisions of Hon. Inusah Fuseini (Former MP and Minister) who during his era acknowledged the "illegalities" and decided not to issue such permits. Again, it must be put on record that, the current Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Hon. Samuel Abu Jinapor (MP) within the first 100 days of his tenure issued a written directive to the Forestry Commission to cease the issuance of these permits. I am of the firm believe that a court declaration will strengthen the Minister's resolve in ensuring sustainable management of our timber and other natural resources.

The genesis of the problem stems from the Timber Resources Management (Amendment) Act, 2002 (ACT 617) that inserted a new subsection (2) of Section 20 in the interpretation section of the Act 547 which read as: "The expression 'timber utilization contract' shall apply with the modifications that are necessary to a certificate of purchase, a permit or any other authorization for timber rights approved by the Minister on the recommendation of the Commission". Ministers for Land and Natural Resources, over the years, have deemed and interpreted this insertion in the interpretation section of ACT 547 as a power to issue other types of commercial timber rights without following all the laid-out processes for the grant of Timber Utilization Contracts such as the need for competitive bidding and parliamentary ratification as prescribed by the Constitution in Article 268 (1) and Sections 3, 6A, 7, 8 and 9 of ACT 547.

The reliefs I am seeking for include:

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Snapshot of Press statement

PARTNER TO SAVE OUR FORESTS- DOMESTIC AND EXPORT TIMBER MARKET ACTORS TOLD

The Director of Operations and Acting Executive Director of the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) of the Forestry Commission (FC), Dr. Nurudeen Iddrisu, has reiterated the need for a strong collaboration between the key actors in the export and domestic markets to ensure sustainability of Ghana's forests.

Speaking at an Inception Workshop on the project, "Preparing Domestic Market Players towards FLEGT Licensing", in Accra, Dr. Iddrisu stated that, partnership between the two segments of the timber industry would lead to constant supply of wood for domestic use.

To this effect, he disclosed that the Forestry Commission is implementing a 100% Yield Removal Policy that mandates Concessionaires to remove some species that they have no market for.

According to him, the policy is a step away from the practice where concessionaires removed their preferred species for export, denying the local market of the opportunity to harvest the remaining trees. "With this policy, we require them to remove all so they can sell the other species to the domestic timber merchants; that would ensure constant supply of wood on the market and curb illegal logging,"

He, therefore, appealed to the key actors to work together to save Ghana's forests and protect the jobs of those who depend on the sector for their livelihoods.

The one-year project, sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the European (EU) with support from the Swedish Government and UKaid, is to be implemented by the Domestic Lumber Traders Association (DOLTA).



© Ghana skills development

It is to train some 120 domestic timber traders to understand and follow the processes in line with the Ghana Legality Assurance System (GHLAS) leading to the issuance of Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Licenses.

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UK Government begins Phase II Support for Small-Medium Timber Industries in Ghana and Liberia



© NDF NDF supports a Timber Company with Personal Protective Equipment

The Government of the UK through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) under their Forest Governance Markets and Climate (FGMC) programme is supporting small-medium timber industries in Ghana and Liberia to build capacity to supply and trade in legal timber.

Introduction of the FLEGT/VPA programme in Ghana and Liberia revealed serious capacity challenges in the timber industry. Large numbers of the logging and processing companies fell short of legality requirements in their operations.

To support compliance with FLEGT requirements, the FCDO with UKaid funded the Nature & Development Foundation (NDF) to implement the project, "Building the Capacities of Small and Medium Forest Enterprises in Ghana and Liberia to Supply and Trade in Legal Timber"-Phase-I.

Implementation of the Phase-1 of the project, yielded significant gains including the generation of momentum for the implementation of the public procurement policy on timber and timber products. Stakeholders of the policy are motivated and ready to seize the opportunity for easier implementation of the policy.

The project also increased knowledge on use of 'lesser used timber species'. Members of the Ghana Chamber of Construction Industries (GhCCI) now understand the usability of these lesser used timber species that can serve as substitute for the popular known species which are currently not available in sufficient quantities.

The project also promoted legal timber trade on the domestic market of Ghana; through the development of a virtual "legal timber market" www.ghanatimbermarket.com. The App hosts suppliers of legal timber with contact details and products as a way to facilitate legal timber trade between individuals and private sector entities interested in purchasing legal timber.

Additionally, it has enhanced transparency in the implementation of FLEGT in Ghana; through the creation of the industry portal to the Ghana wood tracking system. The portal is a window to the GWTS for private sector.

To consolidate these efforts and continue building the capacity of timber companies to be able to comply with FLEGT requirements in Ghana and Liberia, Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) is again being funded by UKaid through the FCDO to implement a phase II of the project.

Given the importance of gender in the sector, project activities in this phase are designed not only to be gender-sensitive but also gender-responsive as dedicated activities to give voice to women in the sector will also be implemented.

In Liberia, with respect to Liberia Timber Association (LibTA) and Liberia Chainsaw and Timber Dealers Union (LICSATDUN), a lot remains to be done particularly on association management, membership capacity to comply with FLEGT regulations, fund raising and financial management. There is the high desire for LICSATDUN to engage further with LibTa and other stakeholders to spearhead the development of the chainsaw code of forest harvesting practices and generally improve timber industry front in Liberia and this extension seeks to support the processes.

It is expected that by the end of the project in Liberia, executives and members of LibTA will be strengthened for effective management and engagement with communities and other stakeholders. On the other side, LICSATDUN is expected to have capacity to engage and contribute to reforms affecting forest management in Liberia.

In Ghana, project implementers expect that ending the project, procurement of legal timber for public works will be mainstreamed into local government procedures and all local assemblies in Ghana will be enforcing timber procurement guidelines.

Additionally, It is anticipated by project implementer's that by December 2022, there will be a functional mobile legal timber website with at least 200 vendors. Also, accessing information on properties of Lesser Used Species (LUS) will be easier and available to interested users by the end of the project.

Implementing partners for the project are, Nature & Development Foundation (Lead), Kumasi Wood Cluster (KWC), Liberia Timber Association (LTA) and Liberia Chainsaw and Timber Dealers Union (LICSATDUN).

FIAG HOSTS IVORIAN DELEGATION IN FOREST CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

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Organizations (CSOs), in the sector, comprising the Civic Response, Nature and Development Foundation (NDF), Legal Working Group, in Accra and the Ghana Timber Millers Organization (GTMO) in Kumasi.

The visit was part of Ivory Coast's quest to learn about how Ghana is preparing for the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance Trade (FLEGT) license under the Voluntary

Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU), aimed at conserving the forests by ensuring only legal wood is procured and exported or sold on the domestic market.

Countries such as Liberia, Gabon and Cameroon have been in partnership with Ghana in the quest to manage their forests sustainably and trade regionally to extract benefits of their natural resources.

Story by: Communication Team

Source: Nature and Development Foundation

Tropenbos and EcoCare Ghana support Green Ghana Project

As part of efforts to support government's Green Ghana Project, Tropenbos Ghana and EcoCare Ghana have presented thirty Nine

Thousand (39,000) indigenous and fruit tree seedlings to the Bono East Regional Office of Forestry Commission.

The two environmental NGOs are partners in the European Union funded Landscapes and Environmental Agility across the Nation (LEAN) project in the Transition Landscape.

According to the Project implementers, In line with the objective of the LEAN project, they are committed to supporting the government's green Ghana initiative as it embarks on an agenda to restore Ghana's degraded landscapes, mitigate climate change and enhance the livelihoods of rural communities.

The LEAN project's objective is to directly contribute to the national efforts of conserving biodiversity, improving livelihoods of smallholder farmers, increasing climate change resilience and reducing emissions



© ECG Cross section of women in Techiman who planted their tree seedlings

from land use changes in the savannah, high forest and transition zones of Ghana.

The four-year project funded by the European Union would be implemented by Rainforest Alliance in partnership with World Vision Ghana, Tropenbos Ghana, and EcoCare Ghana in the High Forest, Savannah and Transition Landscapes of Ghana respectively.

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© ECG Director of Tropenbos Ghana, Madam Mercy Owusu Ansah, watering her plant after planting

PARTNER TO SAVE OUR FORESTS- DOMESTIC AND EXPORT TIMBER MARKET ACTORS TOLD

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The FLEGT Licensing training programmes hitherto covered the export market, leaving out the domestic stakeholders. This training is to get on board those who couldn't benefit from previous projects.

President of the Ghana Timber Association (GTA), Mr. Alex Dadzie, for his part, pleaded with stakeholders in the domestic market to take advantage of this unique opportunity to prepare themselves for FLEGT Licensing in order not to lose out when it fully takes off.

"FLEGT comes with a lot of benefits to stakeholders, so we all need to prepare ourselves so we don't lose out when the licenses are eventually issued," Mr. Dadzie reiterated.

A Steering Committee of major stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations such as Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) and Kumasi Wood Cluster (KWC) has been formed to work out implementing modalities.

Story By: Communication Team

TAXI DRIVER KILLED IN TIMBER TRUCK CHASE AT ASAMANKESE



Angry youth of Asamankese block road in protest

The youth of Asamankese are calling for the prosecution of a soldier who allegedly killed a taxi driver whilst chasing a truck load of suspected illegal logs.

Narrating the incident, Mr. Adu Kona, the Chairman of the Domestic Lumber Traders Association (DOLTA), said on Monday, April 5, the taxi driver, George Yaw Goh, was leading a truck loaded with lumber from Asamankese to Accra, together with the owner of the load.

As they moved along, a pickup with registration number GV 71-19 followed them on suspicion of transporting illegal

wood. At the barrier at Abesiem, the pickup got closer and a soldier allegedly fired a shot at the taxi of vehicle number GR 3847-21, piercing through the back seat, killing the taxi driver instantly.

"The pickup driver sped off after the incident but was chased by the police men at the barrier, who sent a message to the Adeiso Police about an approaching pickup," Mr. Kona revealed.

He said, the vehicle was intercepted at Adeiso and the occupants, two soldiers and a forest guard were taken to Asuokwa Police Station but were later released to report at the Asamankese Police. This was after some altercation with the police men at the barrier.

Later in the evening, some vehicles with soldiers numbering about 20, came to the Asamankese Police Station to report the case with the accused soldier.

The youth are angrily calling for the arrest and prosecution of the soldier to ensure justice is done as no action is reported to have been taken since.

Story by: Communication Team

ENUMERATORS AND SUPERVISORS SCHOOLED TO COLLECT DATA ON VPA IMPACT



© CR Cross section of participants at the VPA impact survey training workshop

Fifteen enumerators and five supervisors to carry out a VPA impact survey have been trained in Accra. The four-day workshop, was aimed at equipping the data collectors with understanding of the questions to be administered, how to administer the questionnaires using IT techniques and transmit responses to a central database.

The survey which was to collect baseline data on household income, domestic market timber prices and Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) deliberative processes, took place in four Forest Window Districts (FWD) in Ghana; Goaso, Nkawie, Sefwi Wiawso and Akim Oda covering twenty-three administrative districts.

Seven VPA Impact areas were identified: Livelihoods, Forest Conditions, Forest Governance, Market Performance, Forest Management, and Revenue Generation and National VPA Multi Stakeholder Deliberative Processes as the main areas to monitor the impact of VPA implementation.

Civic Response in conjunction with Resource Trust Network, under the auspices of the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme, committed to collecting baseline data for livelihoods, National VPA Multi Stakeholder Deliberative Processes and ratio of volume of legal timber to volume of illegal timber (including confiscated timber as “illegal” removals).

During the survey, baseline information was specifically collected on six livelihood indicators such as income levels in forest fringe communities in FWDs, amount of revenue delivered through the implementation of SRAs, ratio of revenue disbursed by the Office of the Administrator of

Stool Lands (OASL) to funds spent by district assemblies on development projects, farmers are compensated according to market values, number of registered employees in the formal timber industry in FWDs and average price of timber in local markets in selected window districts.

With respect to SRA, though the information is available in the Forestry Services Division Window District offices, there is the need to confirm what was actually paid by the timber right holders and what was actually received by the beneficiary communities.

Regarding revenue disbursed by OASL to District Assemblies, the information is

available at OASL but funds spent by District Assemblies on development projects can only be assessed from the Administrative Districts and it's not immediately available.

The objectives of the survey were to collect data on livelihoods (household income), verify SRA implementation- that is revenue from SRA paid by timber right holders and revenue received by the beneficiary communities as well as revenue disbursed by OASL to District Assemblies- and the amount spent by District Assemblies on development projects.

The survey also aimed at collecting data on the number of registered employees in the formal timber industry in the FWDs, domestic timber prices and volume of illegal timber from the informal forest sector as well as collect data on the impact of the VPA deliberative process.

In terms of the survey design, the 2010 Population and Housing Census Sampling Frame from the Ghana Statistical Service were used. The sampling frame is simply demarcating the country into small parts called Enumeration Areas (EAs) for ease of collecting information.

Two hundred and eighty-nine (289) EAs were identified from these four FWDs out of which a sample of 80 EAs was selected. The Ghana Census of Agriculture household lists for these 80 EAs were then collected from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS). For each EA, 12 Households were selected and it is from these households that data was collect.

Source: Civic Response

Tropenbos and EcoCare Ghana support Green Ghana Project

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The project will also build climate resilience and promote natural resource conservation through training and mentoring of Twelve Thousand (12,000) smallholders on Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) and Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in six selected districts.

These districts include Offinso North, Offinso Municipal, Nkoranza North, Nkoranza South, Techiman North and Techiman Municipal all within the forest Savanna transition landscape.

Tropenbos Ghana and EcoCare Ghana call on all organizations and individuals to support the Green Ghana Project to help restore our degraded landscapes. They extended commendations to the Government of Ghana, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, and the Forestry Commission for the timely and crucial intervention of the Project.

The Green Ghana initiative aims at planting five million trees in a single day across the country to recover the loss vegetation caused by human activities such as deforestation and illegal mining.

Source: EcoCare Ghana

EU OPTIMISTIC ABOUT GHANA FLEGT LICENSE



“We are optimistic for Ghana to be the second country in the world to be issued with the VPA-FLEGT License because we know Ghana has what it takes to move the process forward,” he said with confidence.

He said the EU and the stakeholders in the process were pushing and were looking forward to the “Minister’s new energy to push things forward,” declaring that nothing would stop them now.

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Mr. Chris Ackon, the European Union Representative in Ghana, is optimistic Ghana would complete the processes leading to the issuance of FLEGT License for timber export.

Mr. Ackon, who expressed the optimism during a Legal Working Group webinar, said, the EU had been waiting for the political push to complete the process that has taken some eleven years. He noted that the enthusiasm of the new Minister for Lands and Natural Resources gives hope of something happening soon.

He disclosed that the Minister, Samuel Abu Jinapor had already had a meeting with the EU delegation in Ghana and is scheduled to hold further consultations on the way forward.

He revealed that, so far, only Indonesia had completed the process and had been issued with the license, allowing it full access to the EU market. Six other countries, including Ghana, have had their licenses ratified but not operational.

The remaining eight of the fifteen countries seeking to have the FLEGT License, are at negotiation stages.

Ghana is gunning to become the second country to be issued with the FLEGT License as it awaits the conversion of extant Leases into Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs) by Parliament.

Mr. Chris Ackon further reminded Ghana of the EU’s commitment to the Green Deal which places premium on environmental responsibility on all products exported to its member countries.

The Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) License under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) is an EU mechanism to ensure only legally procured timber or timber products are exported to its member countries.

Ghana is currently awaiting Parliament to ratify existing timber leases into Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs) to complete a process that has lasted some eleven years.

Story By: Communication Team



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EU, UK TO ROLL OUT TOUGH REGULATIONS ON COCOA BY 2024

The European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK) are to come up with tough regulations on the import of cocoa by the year 2024.

Disclosing this information at the launch of the Ecocare Ghana’s Cocoa Governance and Advocacy Project in Accra via zoom, Madam Julia Christian of UK based organization, Fern, said the regulations would ensure that any cocoa, whose production is known to have caused deforestation and violated human rights, is restricted from entering the UK or EU.

Madam Christian said, per the new regulations which are currently under consideration by Parliament, the EU wouldn’t allow in such cocoa irrespective of whether the deforestation was legally or illegally caused. The UK, on the other hand, would only prohibit the importation of cocoa that illegally caused deforestation.

The new regulations would also frown on human rights and environmental violations such as the use of child or forced labour in cocoa farms, among others. She revealed that the regulations were expected to be ready for full

implementation by between 2023 and 2024, warning that the two economic blocks would be uncompromising on enforcement.

“EU Companies found to have violated the new rules, risk paying huge fines and in some cases, civil liability actions could be taken against them. Countries could even be banned for some time when found culpable, as was the case with Malawi,” she warned.

On the issue of definition and determination of terms, some Civil Society Organizations expressed concerns over the

imposition of rules on producer countries under terms crafted to suit the two economic blocs, especially when it comes to what constitutes a forest, deforestation and child labor.

Mr. Albert Katako of Civic Response, a Civil Society Organization (CSO), proposed that producer countries, such as Ghana and Ivory Coast, come up with their own terms and definitions as blocs, instead of always swallowing those imposed on them by their partners.

The Cocoa Governance and Advocacy Project, an initiative of Ecocare Ghana with support from UKaid, Fern and Gower Street, was launched in Accra to realize a reformed cocoa sector where decisions are being made through an effective multi-stakeholder process.

It seeks, among others, to improve cocoa governance through targeted advocacy and stakeholder mobilization and to facilitate and consolidate civil society actions in cocoa sector reform in Ghana by leveraging ongoing due diligence reforms in the EU and UK.

Story by: Communication Team



© Reuters

LACK OF SAFETY AT SOKOBAN WOOD VILLAGE WORRYING

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Expressing her concerns in an interview after a tour of the oldest wood market in Ghana, Madam Asumang-Yeboah, said safety is an integral requirement of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Licensing regime and therefore must not be taken for granted.

"Safety is an issue here. None of the shops or sheds we visited were in safety apparatus. Nobody was in safety gadgets. Safety is part of the FLEGT Legality definition," she emphasized.

According to Mrs Asumang-Yeboah, although the wood village is a market, some of the people are processors and therefore must adhere to Principle five (5) of the Ghana Legality Assurance System (GhLAS) which requires that all processing is carried out at all times in accordance with standards prescribed by statutes.

She further added that per Act 651 (Labour Act Section 118-124) and LI 1833 on Health and employment (Section 18-20), an employer must ensure that his employee works under satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions.

She called for education as the solution to the problem. "When you are in the market or processing centre you need to be protected from the harm, the dust and all the others. We need to educate them. They need to know the essence of safety and be able to comply with the regulation".

A walk through the market showed a complete



©Sally

Secretary of GSTSA, Mr Mohammed Kamil Is-haaq, briefing the Women in Forestry about operations at the Sokoban Wood Village

disregard for safety and an apparent lack of knowledge of what gadgets have to be used in the processing of wood prior to sales.

Secretary of the Ghana Sawm Timber Sellers Association, GSTSA, Mr Mohammed Kamil Is-haaq, also admitted that occupational safety was of great worry to them.

He said though workers at the Sokoban Wood Village express discomfort in their usage of the safety equipment, he believes continuous training will make workers acquainted with them.

"The problem is, from day one when they were introduced to those machines, they started using them

with their bare hands and because they have not been trained, that is why they are having problems using them" he explained.

He urged other institutions to assist them with some protective gadgets in order to enable them put things in order.

On the issue of legality compliance, Madam Doreen Asumang-Yeboah said though some timber traders on the domestic market are complying with the required standards, there is still the need to build their capacity and bring more traders on board.

She believes this will eventually make all timber on the domestic market legally complaint for trade.

The Women in Forestry is a platform facilitated by Rights and Advocacy Initiatives Network (RAIN). The activity is undertaken in collaboration with Client Earth with funding from the UK Government through the Forest, Governance, Marketing and Climate programme.

Story by: Communication Team

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ABOUT NDF

The Nature & Development Foundation (NDF) was legally established in November 2013 in Ghana. It was born out of the long presence of WWF in Ghana and across the West African region as a non-profit organization, limited by

guarantee.

The foundation has a mission to help build a society in which human development and nature conservation complement each other. It also believes that, ways exist to balance the needs of development with sustainable land uses that do not threaten forest biodiversity and forest dependent livelihoods of the region.

NDF understands that it must not limit itself to working only with those in the forest industries itself, but must engage more widely in multiple sectors and processes if it is to achieve its mission.

Though currently active in Ghana, it aims to increase its activities in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia in the future. For more information visit www.ndfwestafrica.org Or call TEL: +233-302-518-710



ABOUT ECOCARE GHANA

EcoCare Ghana is a rights-based campaign and advocacy organization duly registered and licensed to operate as a local non-

governmental organization. We focus on policy and practices around community rights and forests, and how it relates to development, climate change, wildlife conservation, agriculture and other land-use options. We seek to positively impact the livelihoods of resource communities for them to meaningfully contribute and equitably benefit and develop from resource use.

We want to see transformed and well-to-do communities protecting resources and contributing to national development. We are driven by the zeal and enthusiasm to ensure that NRE policies address the need of local people. EcoCare Ghana seeks to build strategic partnerships with like-minded local and international organizations that share our principles and values. We operate as a flat organization with open-door policy that promote gender-mainstreaming and equal opportunities for all; irrespective of race, religion or sex

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