

The Flegt

Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade

Newsletter

| 25th Edition, June, 2022

KEEP OFF CONFISCATED TIMBER ISSUE

• *CSOs Tell EU over FLEGT Licensing*

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the forestry sector, have expressed concern against introducing the matter of confiscated timber in the ongoing process in the implementation of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) licensing.

In a communique issued at the end of a Legal Working Group meeting in Accra, the CSOs stated that, “the issue of

>>> *Continue on Page 3*



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Cote D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso To Copy Ghana's Crema Concept

>>> *Story on Page 7*



JOINT THREE NATION ANTI-POACHING TASKFORCE PROPOSED

Participants at a meeting between management of the Mole National Park (Ghana), Nazinga Game Ranch (Burkina Faso) and Comoe National Park (Cote d'Ivoire), have proposed the setting up

>>> *Continue on Page 7*



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Sir John Triggers Controversy From The Grave

A will, purported to be that of the late Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie, popularly known as Sir John, former Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission (FC), has triggered nationwide controversy and a call to action by Civil Society Organization (CSOs) to salvage the Achimota Forest.

The will, leaked to the media, has the late Sir John allocating portions of the Achimota Forest lands and a Ramsar site to his relatives. This has raised suspicion

>>> *Continue on Page 2*



© citinewsroom.com | Late Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie, (Former C.E.O Forestry Commission)

FOLLOW UP ON PARLIAMENT

• EU Delegation member to CSOs

A member of the European Union Delegation to Ghana, Mr. Robert Schiliro, has asked Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on the implementation of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) to follow up on the Parliamentary Select Committee to finalize the process.

Mr. Schiliro, who was speaking at the Legal Working Group of CSOs in the forestry sector, stated that, though Ghana has not yet attained FLEGT Certification status, significant work had been done”.

He, therefore urged the COSs to pursue the

process to its conclusive end by following up on the Parliamentary Select Committee on Lands and Forestry, to ensure extant leases are converted into Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs), the last stage of the certification process.

Mr. Schiliro, who is leaving Ghana at the end of his mission in the country, expressed hope that the final stages of the process would be completed soon.

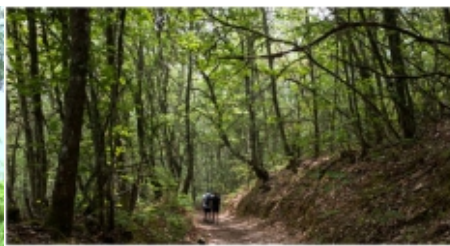
“I am leaving with good hope that we are at the final steps. I will be out but there would be people around to push things forward,” he declared, admonishing them



not to sit on their success. He said the situation Ghana finds itself now in the FLEGT Certification pursuit is advanced to justify the next steps because a lot had been achieved.

>>> *Continue on Page 3*

Sir John Triggers Controversy From The Grave



>>> *Continued from Front Page*

of possible abuse of office and allocation of protected conservation sites to politicians and individuals.

The will, the subject of a court action, states: “I give my land situated at the Achimota Forest in the name of Jakaypro Limited and measuring 5.541 acres to the following persons forever.– Yaw Amoateng Afriyie – One (1) acre– Eva Akua Afriyie – One (1) acre– Ivy Akua Afriyie – One (1) acre – Elizabeth Asare Boateng (aka Mother) – One (1) acre – Michael Owusu – 1.541 acres.”

The will also pronounces that, “I give my land also situated at the Achimota Forest in the name of Fasoh Limited and measuring 0.987 acres to my nephews Michael Owusu, Yaw Boadu, and Kwabena Amoateng forever.”

The will further states, “I jointly own a piece of land at Achimota Forest with Charles Owusu. Upon my demise, my portion of the said land should be given to Ruth Korkor Odonkor.”

Sir John's will makes an inroad into the Ramsar site at Sakumono as he gives a portion of it to his sisters and their children.

“I give my land situated at the Ramsar area at Sakumono in the Greater Accra Region and measuring 5.07 acres to my sisters Abena Saah and her children, Comfort Amoateng and her children, Abena Konadu and Juliet Akua Arko and her children on equal share basis forever,” it discloses.

The allocation of the land located on a Ramsar site to other relatives by a man expected to protect such sites per his position then as the Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission (FC) further deepened the controversy.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOS), alarmed by the revelations in the will, have started consultations on possible petitions to the authorities or a legal action, alongside those being undertaken by other concerned organizations and personalities.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Samuel Abu Jinapor has assured Ghanaians of thorough investigations into the matter and made it clear that, no one would inherit such lands.



© citinewsroom.com Late Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie, (Former C.E.O Forestry Commission)

“That said, given the totality of the circumstances of the said allegations, I, as the minister for Lands and Natural Resources, I have directed the Lands and Forestry Commissions to deem any ownership of lands, both in the Achimota Forest and the Sakumono Ramsar Site by the late Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie as void and are to take the appropriate actions accordingly,” a statement by the Minister said.

Sir John may be dead and gone but the controversy he has triggered with his will, will continue to live with Ghanaians as concerted actions against it rise.

Story by: Communication Team

FOLLOW UP ON PARLIAMENT

• *EU Delegation member to CSOs*



>>> *Continued from Page 2*

He described the current state of Ghana's FLEGT Licensing process as a car waiting for people to drive it to the next level, observing that the process had been delayed by political impediments.

The implementation of the FLEGT Licensing regime is aimed at ensuring only legally acquired timber or timber products are exported to the European Union (EU) countries. It is a process under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the EU and Ghana.

Ghana started the process in 2009 and has gone through several processes, at times stall by the change in government, leading to the reinventing of the wheel.

The final stage involves the conversion of extant leases into Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs) by the Parliament of Ghana after Cabinet recently approved the leases.

According to the Chief Director of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Mr. Joseph Osiakwan, 156 contracts are to be signed by the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, for onward transfer to Parliament and the process is on.

He assured the CSOs that all would be done to avoid delays in spite of the busy schedule of the Minister and Parliament.

Story by Communication Team

KEEP OFF CONFISCATED TIMBER ISSUE

• *CSOs Tell EU over FLEGT Licensing*



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Legal Working Group Meeting

>>> *Continued from Front Page*

confiscated timber should not be re-tabled as a precondition for Ghana's VPA readiness. It is not an issue that should cause any further delay for the process." They suggested that the issue may be discussed, and the current practice evaluated and if need be, improved as a post FLEGT license matter.

They were of the view that, "as far as Civil Society is aware, the issue of confiscated timber has been comprehensively addressed with the provision of legal basis as contained in regulation 28 of the Timber Resources Management (Legality Licensing) Regulation, 2017 (L.2254) and data showing the negligible volumes in the Ghana Wood Tracking System (GWTS)."

Though they are not completely against the re-introduction of the matter, they are opposed to the timing, thus would like the European Union (EU) not to make it as a pre-condition for the FLEGT Licensing.

We have resolved that, "the EU may introduce the issue of confiscated timber for discussion but will urge the EU not to present this issue as a precondition for issuing FLEGT licenses." Insisting that it may unduly further delay or derail the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) implementation process.

They hint of a vigorous campaign against such a move to ensure the right thing is done, if it is not resolved through dialogue. "If the issue of confiscated timber is not resolved by mutual discussions in advance of the next joint session of the Joint Monitoring Review Mechanism (JMRM) and becomes a

stalemate which will further delay the issuance of FLEGT licenses, we the CSOs in the forest sector will actively campaign and urge Ghana to invoke its rights under paragraph 4 of Article 24 of the GH-EU VPA Agreement for Arbitration on the issue."

Their anticipated course of action follows information they had to the effect that, confiscated timber has been re-tabled as a new issue from the EU although not covered or raised in the 2nd Joint Assessment Report and

presented as an issue that needs to be resolved before Ghana can issue FLEGT licenses.

The Communique commended the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources for the progress made towards finalizing the contract documents required for the final stage of the process towards Ghana's FLEGT license, aimed at ensuring only legal timber or timber products are exported to the EU market.

They called on the Ministry to explore with the select committee of Parliament avenues to speed up ratification before the house goes for recess at the end of July to continue to show that Ghana is fully committed to improve forest governance. The Ministry had asserted at the meeting that 156 Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs) had been approved by cabinet for submission to Parliament and these contracts are currently being signed by the minister.

The CSOs rather want an expedited approach at submitting the extant leases and permits to Parliament for ratification to be adopted by the Ministry.

Ghana has reached the final stage of the FLEGT Licensing process, which started in 2009, with extant leases awaiting conversion into Timber Utilization Contracts (TUCs). The completion of that process would make Ghana the first country in Africa to be issued with the license and the second in the world, behind Indonesia.

Read full Communique here <http://www.ecocareghana.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Legal-Working-Group-Communique.pdf>

Source: Legal Working Group

BEYOND THE “KOO KAA” - SAFEGUARDING

Introduction

“Koo Kaa” is an Akan slang term which translates loosely to shouting or noisemaking. The news that portions of the Achimota forest lands have been degazetted and released to the Owoo Family has been met with varied emotions and reactions, many of which have been expressed loudly. The aim of this article is to ensure that beyond the discussions and debates on the degazetting of portions of the Achimota Forest, we begin to take concrete steps at clarifying the legislative framework for the management and utilisation of forest resources to accord with the commitment of the commercial benefits of forests and the conservation advantages of preserving our forest reserves.

The decision of the current government, which is anchored on the decisions of previous governments, draws legitimacy from the Forest Act of 1927 (CAP 157).² This 1927 law remains the law that vests government with the power to constitute lands as forest reserves. Section 2 of CAP 157 provides as follows:

Creation of forest reserves

Subject to section 21 the President may by executive instrument, constitute as a forest reserve,

- lands which are the property of the Government;
- stool lands, at the request of the relevant authority;
- private lands, at the request of the owner;
- lands in respect of which the President is, on the advice of the Forestry Commission...

With specific reference to the Achimota Forest, the reserve was created on land which was compulsorily acquired by the government. Two tracts of land were acquired from the Owoo Family, in 1921 and 1927, by a certificate of title, made pursuant to the Public Lands Ordinance of 1876. Thus, prior to the creation of the reserve in 1927 the government owned the land. Government has given reasons for the release of the land to the Owoo family. This article aims to test the legal accuracy of the actions of government and propose recommendations on how to protect the forest estate of Ghana.

Legal Framework for the management of forests

The current legal framework for the regulation and management of forests in Ghana is a perilous quagmire of constitutional obligations fleshed out through substantive and procedural provisions in scattered Acts of Parliament and legislative instruments. The scattered nature of the legislation and numerous piecemeal amendments of these laws over

the years has left a maze of fragmented and sometimes inconsistent provisions as its heritage. The already complex domestic legal framework is further layered with obligations under international conventions, treaties, and agreements.

The oldest legislation on Forest in force in Ghana is the Forest Act of 1927. The 1927 Forest Act provides the conditions and procedures to establishing forest reserves by the government. This piece of legislation has seen some amendments and consolidations with the aim of harmonizing its provisions. The Forest Act of 1954 consolidated preceding forest Acts and ordinances from 1927 to 1949. This consolidated Act was subsequently amended. For instance, the provision in the consolidated Forest Act relating to a Forest Improvement Fund was repealed by the Forest Improvement Fund Act, which in turn was repealed in 2000 by the Forest Plantation Development Fund Act (Act 583). Also, provisions on forest offences were repealed by the Forest Protection Act in 1974 (NRCD 243) with subsequent amendments in 1986 (PNDCL142) and 2002 (Act 624). The provisions of the Forest Act still in force must be read with the necessary modifications to give effect to the Timber Resources Management Act 1998 (Act 547).

The legalities of degazetting forest reserves.

The Forest Act of 1927 vests the power to degazette a forest reserve in the President. Section 19 of the Act provides that:

“The President may, if satisfied that a particular land should not be a forest reserve, by executive instrument published in the Gazette, direct that from a date specified in the order the land or a portion of that land reserved under this Act shall cease to be a forest reserve.”

From the above provision, two conditions must be satisfied before the degazetting of a



forest reserve. The first condition is that “President being satisfied that the land should not be forest reserve” and second “by executive instrument published in the Gazette” direct that the said land ceases to be a forest reserve.

From the available information contained in the press statement of Government on the degazetting of portions of the Achimota forest land, Government was “satisfied that a particular land should not be a forest reserve”. The conclusion was reached based on recommendations made by committees set up by previous governments to inquire into the issue of releasing lands to the Owoo family. Subsequently Government issued Executive Instrument 144 (Cessation of Forest Reserve), 2022 to degazette portions of the Achimota forest. In the main, Government appears to have followed the prescriptions of the Forest Act in degazetting the Achimota forest.



GHANA'S FOREST RESERVES

So why the “Koo Kaa”?

First, the locus of power to degazette is being questioned. There is a school of thought that has called the validity of E.I 144 into question in light of the coming into force of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925). Section 93 of Act 925, when read together with the interpretation Act 925 gives to “Public Place”, indicates that the power of the President under the Forest Act 1927 to solely declassify a Forest reserve no longer exists. That by Act 925, the degazetting of a forest reserve constitutes a rezoning or change of use of a public space and therefore requires the approval of parliament.

Section 93 (1) and (4) of Act 925 reads:

93. (1) Where a person seeks to change the zoning of the whole or part of a piece of land, that person shall apply in writing to the District Spatial Planning Committee of the district to which the change relates in the form prescribed in the zoning regulations and planning standards.

(4) Without limiting subsection (3), the change of use or re-zoning of a public space shall be subjected to approval by Parliament.

A public space has also been defined as:

“public space” means a generally open area accessible to and used by the public including resource lands, urban utility space, riparian buffer zones, natural park areas, forests, urban parks, recreational areas, infrastructure right of way, areas of cultural or historical interests;

This argument of implied repeal of the President's power to issue an E.I to declassify a forest reserve is based on the legal maxim *legis posterior derogat legi priori* – where the provisions of a later legislation are inconsistent, or cannot stand, with the provisions of an existing legislation, the later legislation repeals the existing Act. Thus, because the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925) is later in time to the Forests Act of 1927, it has impliedly repealed the Forests Act, and with it, the President's power to create and declassify a forest reserve by issuing E.Is.

There is also another school of thought that argues that E.I 144 is valid and carries the full force of law. Their argument is anchored on the *generalia specialibus non derogant* legal maxim. The *generalia specialibus* maxim operates on the basis that a special provision; in this case Forest Act 1927, overrides a general provision (Act 925) of law, irrespective of time of passage. The *generalia specialibus* principle therefore operates as an exception to the general rule that where the provisions of a later Act are inconsistent with or cannot stand with the provisions of an existing Act the later Act repeals the existing Act.

Act 925 was enacted to regulate the land use and spatial planning, provide for sustainable development of land and human settlements through a decentralized planning system, ensure judicious use of land to improve quality of life, promote health and safety in respect of human settlements and to regulate national, regional, district and local spatial planning, and generally to provide for spatial aspects of socio-economic development and for related matters. Whereas the Forests Act was enacted for the protection of forests and for the constitution and protection of forest reserves and to provide for related matters. In analysing the two laws, it is evident that the Act 925 is a statute of general application whereas the Forests Act is a special legislation enacted to specifically cater for the protection and constitution of forest reserves.

In my considered view, there is an apparent incoherence between the Forest Act 1927 and Act 925 on whether it is the Executive or Parliament that has the power in law to declassify forest reserves. This incoherence in the legislation creates fertile grounds for either of the two schools of thought to be presented as accurate interpretation of the power to declassify forest reserves. This matter might be resolved definitively by a Court of competent jurisdiction.

The second reason for the “Koo Kaa” is the allegation that compensation was not fully paid to the Owoo family when the said land was compulsorily acquired, and that the degazetted portion was given out in lieu of unpaid compensation. When it comes to the payment of compensation in relation to land compulsorily acquired, the 1992 Constitution provides in Article 20 (5) and (6) as follows:

Article 20 (5) and (6) provides thus:

"(5) Any property compulsorily taken possession of or acquired in the public interest or for a public purpose shall be used only in the public interest or for the public purpose for which it was acquired.

(6) Where the property is not used in the public interest or for the purpose for which it was acquired, the owner of the property immediately before the compulsory acquisition, shall be given the first option for acquiring the property and shall, or such re-acquisition refund the whole or part of the compensation paid to him as provided for by law or such other amount as is commensurate with the value of the property at the time of the re-acquisition."

The Supreme Court interpreted the scope and effect of Article 20 in the case of Nii



Story by: Clement Kojo Akapame

Kpobi Tettey Tsuru III v. The Attorney-General³ by noting the following: “Since no good reason has been urged on this Court why it should depart from its previous decision on the matter, I am in line with the provisions in article 129 (3) not departing from the previous decision of the Supreme Court. Acquisitions of interest in land done prior to 7/1/1993 are not affected by article 20 of the Constitution.”

From the above decision of the Supreme Court, since the lands in question were compulsorily acquired from the Owoo family prior to 7th January 1993, the Owoo family does not have any claim whatsoever under article 20 of the 1992 Constitution to compensation or request for land in lieu of compensation. Any remedy in law for the Owoo family for alleged non-payment of compensation must be considered against the regime for compulsory land acquisition by government as at 1921 and 1927. Thus, compensation or land in lieu of compensation cannot be the basis or reason for releasing lands to the Owoo family.

Thirdly, there is “Koo Kaa” because there is the belief that the 1927 Forest Act is no longer in sync with the commitments of Government in the protection of the environment. Government has made commitments in the fight against climate change and degazetting a forest reserve, albeit with the view of the degazetted portions being developed in an eco-friendly manner, does not accord with these commitments.

Article 269 of the Constitution requires any transaction in the grant of right to exploit natural resources be ratified by Parliament. The nature of the transaction involving the release of land to the Owoo family is not a transaction in the release of mere state land. It is a transaction that involves the degazetting of a forest reserve created over state lands not stool lands for national purpose. This means that the President holds this state-land-forest reserves in trust for the people of Ghana, like any other natural resource. This type of state-land-forest-reserve in my view should be

>>> *Continue on Page 6*

BEYOND THE “KOO KAA” - SAFEGUARDING GHANA’S FOREST RESERVES

>>> *Continued from Page 5*

considered as “natural resources” and any transaction or contract over this type of land must be subject to parliamentary ratification. This argument which seeks to subject any transaction including change of use involving state-land-forest-reserves to parliamentary ratification is anchored on the intendments of the framers of the constitution on the protection of natural resources and the environment as captured in article 36 (1) (9) as follows:

The State shall take appropriate measures needed to protect and safeguard the national environment for posterity; and shall seek co-operation with other states and bodies for purposes of protecting the wider international environment for mankind.

Involving the representatives of the people in deciding on whether to handover portions of the state-land-forest-reserves would mute the “Koo Kaa”. on the use of executive discretionary powers in degazetting forest reserves.

The final reason for the “Koo Kaa” is on the use of E.Is to gazette and degazette forest reserves. Under the Forest Act 1927, E.Is are the prescribed mode for gazetting and degazetting forest reserves.

E.I 144 has clauses that introduce “restrictive covenants” on how the released lands are to be developed. The effect of “restrictive covenants” contained in the E.I 144, requiring the leaseholders to abide by eco-friendly prescriptions in the development of the land, is problematic and might not stand legal scrutiny. The President's power in the 1927 Forest Act is limited to gazetting and degazetting forest reserves. It does not appear to include the power to prescribe how state lands that have been degazetted and leased to private persons should be developed. For the “restrictive covenants” contained in E.I 144 to have the needed effect, it should have been captured in the leases executed in favour of the Owoo family and not E.I 144.

The issuing of an E.I to change the use of state-land-forest-reserve in my opinion should be considered as an exercise of legislative authority by the Executive and subject to parliamentary scrutiny. I am aware this issue has been discussed in the case of *Exparte Bombelli*⁴ and recently in the case of *Association of Finance Houses v. Bank of Ghana and Attorney General*⁵ where the Supreme Court seems to have introduced a new specie of E.Is. 4 [1984-86] 1 GLR 204 5 Writ No J1/04/2021



It is my considered view that issues surrounding the gazetting and degazetting of forest reserves held in trust for stool or state-land-forest-reserve should be a legislative function. The establishment of forest reserves should be done by legislative instruments to provide safeguards for their perpetual integrity. Ghana's laws follow a vertical hierarchy. Hence, a legislative instrument can only be repealed by another legislative instrument, an Act of Parliament, or the Constitution of Ghana. A legislative instrument establishing a forest reserve would remain in force until it is repealed by either another legislative instrument or an Act of Parliament.

The 1927 legislation which grants the President powers to declassify forest reserves, is outdated and not in sync with intention of Government as captured in the 2012 Forest and Wildlife Policy and the number of commitments aimed at fighting deforestation and climate change, made both on the domestic and international level. It is instructive to note the Government has placed before Parliament, the Wildlife Management Resource Bill which has clauses which require that Protected Areas, including Forest (Resource) Reserves, be created by the promulgation of legislative instruments. This will mean that Parliament will play a role in the creation and de-creation of Protected Areas. The intention of Government as contained in Wildlife Bill 2022 also grounds the argument that the use of E.Is to create and de-create forest reserves is no longer

a preferred procedure and a legislative process by means of passage legislative instruments is a preferred option.

Beyond the “Koo Kaa”

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has taken certain interventions since the issues became public. These interventions include assuring the public that the Achimota Forest is intact, with the issuance of E.I 154 and the declaration of some alleged grants made to the former Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission as void. Parliament is also calling for a probe into allocation of State Lands. Civil Society Organisations are also demanding a Commission of Inquiry and have also petitioned the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice to also investigate alleged conflict of interest in the procedures surrounding the allocation of portions of the Achimota Forest lands.

These actions and interventions are laudable, but 'how do we prevent another Achimota Forest Saga?' is the problem of the day. We can take leaf from how Liberia handled the issue of a raid on its forests. The Liberian Ministry of Justice indicted eight ex-government officials for facilitating the award of secretive illegal logging concessions, known as Private Use Permits (PUP). These permits covered 40 percent of Liberia's forests, and in December 2012, the Liberian government found all 63 PUPs to be illegal and subsequently cancelled all these permits. The issuance of these illegal permits was possible because of the then legal framework for the management of forests in that country. This incident led to an overhaul of the legal framework and the passage of the National Forestry Reform Law of Liberia. This Law makes provision, in 22 Chapters, for the management and conservation of forest resources of Liberia, defines ownership rights and other rights in forests, provides for the protection of the environment and wildlife in forests, regulates the trade in forest products and provides for various other matters relative to forestry and wildlife.

The Achimota forest reserve saga is a watershed moment for Ghana. Leases granted can be cancelled; persons can be found to have acted in conflict of interest and even prosecuted. But if we do not take steps to clarify and consolidate our forest legislation, we will not have acted to safeguard the nation's forest estate. We will still have outdated legislation such as the Forest Act 1927 determining how we manage our forest reserves in 2022.

Beyond the “Koo Kaa”, the following are recommended:

1. Consolidation of the Forest Laws in Ghana – This will provide an opportunity for updating the laws on forest and to provide clear guidelines on management and utilisation of forest resources.

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JOINT THREE NATION ANTI-POACHING TASKFORCE PROPOSED

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of a joint cross-border taskforce to tackle poaching across the three protected areas.

During a two-day Transboundary Collaboration for Ecological Connectivity (Tcec) Meeting between the three countries held at the Mole National Park, the participants pointed out that poachers take advantage of border restrictions to commit offenses in one country and flee to the other, getting away with their crime.

"There are instances where we pursue a poacher from our side of the border but are refrained from continuing because our taskforce cannot enter Ghanaian territory to arrest a criminal. We are currently looking for a poacher we pursued till he entered into Ghana." Mr. Tendreobeogo Ben Sidy Kevin, Manager of Nazinga Game Ranch in Burkina Faso, recounted.

He proposed a well-networked joint committee or taskforce to coordinate and collaborate operations against cross-border poaching and other environmental offenses within and across their various parks.

He was of the view that, such a taskforce in one country would just need a phone call to track and arrest poachers and environmental offenders and repatriate them to the country where the crime was committed.

Mr. Toulo Alain, Assistant Director of Comoe National Park, supported the proposal but warned against tying such taskforces, platforms or committees to projects with limited time frames. He expressed concerns about how joint activities or projects fail to attain the set objectives as they grind to a standstill with the end of the bigger project they are tied to.

To him, the ability to secure sustainable funding for such a proposal would make it more effective, citing the situation in Ivory Coast, where they secured permanent funding for their project without interference from the government.

"Regular funding for such a project would ensure its sustainability and prevent the stalling of such projects with the end of donor-sponsored programmes".

The participants also called for regular training for stakeholders and other sectors of the biodiversity conservation chain to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

They suggested the creating of a WhatsApp platform to facilitate communication among the stakeholders and also return visits to the two other parks for more experience-sharing.

A participant from Burkina Faso lamented over the tendency of judges to issue lesser punishment to environmental and conservation offenders due to their lack of appreciation of the values at stake. He, therefore, suggested that such trainings



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should incorporate the judiciary and the security forces.

Manager of the Mole National Park, Mr. Ali Mahama, was of the view that collaboration between the various parks would ensure a comprehensive bio-conservation in view of the fact that, migrating elephants and other fauna do not require visas to enter other countries, thus need to be jointly monitored.

He was optimistic that the constant meetings between them would enhance their various works and further strengthen trans-border protection of wildlife, especially endangered species.

Executive Director of the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS), Rev David Kpelle, said the meeting was very important to the parks as wildlife in their parks did not belong to any due to the constant trans-border movements.

"This meeting is important to all the parks who jointly own the wildlife and are responsible for their effective management," he said.

This Transboundary Collaboration for Ecological Connectivity (Tcec) Meeting, is part of implementing the SIBCI "Savannah Integrated Biodiversity Conservation Initiative" PROJECT and was organized by the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) and Ghana Wildlife Society with funding from the European Union (EU).

Source: Nature and Development Foundation

Cote D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso To Copy Ghana's Crema Concept

Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso have indicated their desire to replicate the Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) concept in the management of their protected areas, in view of its positive impact on rural community development.

Representatives from Burkina Faso's Nazinga Game Ranch and Ivory Coast's Comoe National Park, who joined their counterparts at the Mole National Park to visit the Murugu-Mognori CREMA were impressed with the benefits of the concept and couldn't hide their admiration as they made the disclosure.

The visit, organized on the sidelines of the Transboundary Collaboration for Ecological Connectivity (Tcec) Meeting between managers of the Mole National Park (Ghana), Nazinga Game Ranch (Burkina Faso) and Comoe National Park (Ivory Coast), was to afford the visitors the opportunity to witness the implementation of the CREMA concept and interact with the beneficiaries.

Community leaders of Murugu and Mognori, recounted how the concept was initially opposed by some of the people, with the misconception that the

management of the Mole National Park were going to use it as an annexation tactics to take their lands from them.

"As we embraced it and started chalking successes, some of the doubting Thomas's started coming on board and together we are working to implement the concept," a community leader said.

He indicated that the community has benefited immensely from the CREMA concept and is working hand-in-hand with Mole Park managers to ensure conservation of biodiversity.

Women in the communities are allowed to enter the area demarcated for the conservation to collect sheanuts and other economic fruits while community tour guides also take tourists round.

"We are currently working on creating tourist centres to accommodate tourists and to help them live within the community as part of their visits," the leaders said.

The accounts of the community leaders, flanked by the women involved in sheanut processing, excited the park managers from the neighboring West African countries to

>>> *Continue on Page 8*

Cote D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso To Copy Ghana's Crema Concept

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conceive the idea of adopting the model.

"There is something similar to this in Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast but admittedly, Ghana's concept is more developed and beneficial to the community. The benefits are an incentive to the fringe community members to be involved," Mr. Tendreobeogo Ben Sidy Kevin, Manager of Nazinga Game ranch, stated, adding that, "we are going to adopt this when we return".

Mr. Toulo Alain, Manager of Comoe National Park, commended the community members for getting on board the concept and disclosed that Ivory Coast will also adopt it.

The Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) concept is a strategy to devolve management powers to communities *that have agreed to collectively manage their natural resources in a sustainable manner for their mutual benefits.*

The Transboundary Collaboration for



Ecological Connectivity (Tcec) Meeting, is part of implementing the SIBCI "Savannah Integrated Biodiversity Conservation Initiative" project and was jointly organized by the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) and Ghana Wildlife

Society with funding from the European Union (EU).

Source: Nature and Development Foundation

**Please send your Feedbacks, Articles, Stories and Contributions to tettehsally@yahoo.com OR sallyviwotor@gmail.com
Contact: 024 936 7890 OR 050 919 9465
Compiled and Produced by Salomey Tetteh-Viwotor**



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 FCDO

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is a ministerial department supported by twelve agencies and public bodies.

The office pursues national interests and project the UK as a force for good in the world. FCDO promotes the interest of British citizens, safeguard the UK's security, defend their values, reduce poverty and tackle global challenges with international partners.

They unite development and diplomacy in one new department. FCDO brings together the best of Britain's international effort and demonstrates the UK acting as a force for good in the world.

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