

3rd Steering Committee Meeting
Held in the FDA Board Room
Wednesday, November 25, 2009
@ 2:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:23 p.m by Hon. John T. Woods, FDA Managing Director who presided over the meeting. He welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the VPA Steering Committee. He then requested for a prayer which was led by Madam Victoria Cole. Thereafter, the agenda was read out by the Chair and adopted by Steering Committee (SC). The minutes were also discussed with corrections, observations and comments made for the Technical Secretariat's prompt action. The minutes were then adopted by the SC.

Executive Order:

The Chair, Hon. Woods informed the Steering Committee (SC) that the Proclamation on the Executive Order has been drafted and sent to Hon. Morris Saytumah who is the Minister for Economic and Legal Affairs. The Chair furthered explained that Hon. Saytumah worked on the Proclamation and sent it to the President's office for signature. The Chair said as soon as he gets a positive signal from the president's office, the Committee will be informed.

Community Election:

With respect to the issue of community election, Mr. Adada Gotomo of the Law Enforcement Department of FDA gave a summary overview of the November 19th and 20th elections which included Montserrado, Margibi, Bomi and Bong Counties. He informed the Steering Committee that ten (10) representatives came from each of the named counties and that all the 40 representatives assembled in Kakata, Margibi County for the election. Mrs. Sely Williams of Bong County was elected as Community Representative for the non forested areas to the SC. The Chair then congratulated the team who conducted the election.

The issue of SDI facilitated election was raised. The Secretariat updated the Steering Committee as saying that all the committee members that were charged with the responsibility to verify and complete the rest of the community election agreed in principle to the way and manner in which SDI facilitated the election in Grand Bassa and Rivercess and Gbarpolu, Lofa and Cape mount counties except the industry that expressed a reservation as regards the representative of Gbarpolu and Lofa counties.

Industry's main concern was regarding the fact that SDI raised concern when industry held an election and the representative lived in town. The industry main concern with the process was that why should SDI allow the election of an individual who resides in Monrovia and not in the County. However, Mr. Kpawulu who is the representative of Gbarpolu said that he was not in the County when he was elected to represent his people.

Following the Industry's accusation, Mr. Kofi Ireland of UNMIL Civil Affairs Department recommended that the committee which was set up for community elections be re-commissioned with the mandate to go to the communities and verify that the process was free and fair. The Chair however, said that for the purpose of the VPA if a community representative is able to communicate to his people and back to the Steering Committee then, there should be no problem as relates to who lives in the county or not and as such the election facilitated by SDI should be accepted. He further reiterated that all community representatives should bring formal communication signed by the (Town Chief, CFDC Head, Elders etc) from the communities they represent to the Steering Committee concerning their representation to the Steering Committee. At this point, Mr. Michael Robert of Grand Cape Mount County presented his letter from his county. As regards to the completion of elections in the southeast, the Secretariat explained that Liberia Democratic Institute (LDI) committed itself to facilitate the community election in the southeast but to date, the election has not been conducted. Unfortunately, all efforts made by the Secretariat to confirm why the election has not been held proved futile; thereby leading the Secretariat to request the mandate from the SC to carry on the election in order to have a complete membership of the Steering Committee as early as possible.

It was agreed upon that the Secretariat communicate to Mr. Dan Sayeh of LDI, stating the deadline and that the body will be expecting the election results at the next meeting. Additionally, it was also agreed upon that plan 'B' of that decision is that the VPA and FDA will conduct the elections based on FDA's Regional Forest Plan.

SC Officials Election:

After a roll call of the SC members present, it was observed that the meeting had a quorum for the purpose of setting up the leadership of the Steering Committee. However, before the appointment of the officers, it was argued by some members that due to the incomplete composition of the SC, it was necessary to defer this decision until there was full composition of the Steering Committee. After the exchange of different views a vote was taken to determine the final decision. The result of the vote was seven (7) persons were in favor of appointing the officers while six (6) were against. At this point, the Presiding Chair asked the Secretariat to nominate names of institutions that can run the affairs of the SC.

The Secretariat then nominated FDA to chair, Industry as deputy chair and Civil Society as secretary. Industry also nominated the Community to serve as secretary. The body unanimously endorsed the FDA to chair the Steering Committee. The rest of the nominations were subjected to the democratic process and the following results were obtained.

Deputy Chair

- 11 persons for Industry
- 3 persons against

Secretary

- 13 persons for Community
- 1 Person against

Update on Technical Secretariat:

Mr. Kofa gave a summary report on the Technical Secretariat for the month of November 2009. He mentioned that two workshops were held on November 4th and 17th. He said, as a result of the workshops two working groups were formulated, namely the Legality Definition and the Legality Assurance System Technical Working Groups. TS Coordinator also informed the SC that several working sessions have been held during the month under review to help the process move on speedily. Mr. Kofa made mentioned of the visitation of the two guest consultants the Secretariat had, the participation of the TS in the non-forested election amongst others.

Budget:

The budget which was already in the possession of SC members could not be discussed since in fact most members were unable to read and comment, thereby leading the forum to accept the suggestion made by Mr. Rudolph Merab that a sub-committee be commissioned to study the budget and report to the special called meeting which was scheduled for Tuesday, December 1, 2009. The sub-committee included:

1. Industry
2. Community
3. GOL/MOF
4. NGO Coalition
5. UNMIL Civil Affairs Department

Subsequently, the SC members attending the meeting authorized the TS to spend one third (1/3) of its budget until the committee reports to the body. In addition, Hon. Woods cautioned the committee to work expeditiously re-emphasizing the importance of the report. He said the report has to be on hand before the Secretariat can continue to work.

Presentation on Video Conference:

The TS Coordinator, Mr. Amos Kofa spoke on the role of the NT. He said the Video Conference involving Liberia and Europe is scheduled for December 8, 2009 which needs some attention. He, however, informed the body that there is a planned meeting between the TS and the NT. The chairman provided a document which carries the ToR which was read by Mr. Kofa.

Still discussing the NT, Mrs. Stephanie Altman indicated that the Terms of Reference for the NT indicated that government representatives were on the negotiating team as they could represent government and it was those representatives who would decide if other stakeholder groups could join the negotiating team.

Called Meeting:

The Technical Secretariat proposed a Special Called meeting for December 1, to enable the working groups to communicate to the SC for the SC's onward communication to the NT.

The proposal was endorsed by the entire body and the meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, December 1, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. in the FDA Board Room.

AOB

Mr. Kofa informed SC about an existing website on VPA processes which is being managed by Mr. Robert Nyahn of the CSO on the SC. He said there are difficulties in developing a website therefore he thinks dealing with Mr. Nyahn would be a great help to the Secretariat.

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The presiding chairman said it was a glorious opportunity for the VPA to take advantage of as he puts it to the rest of the SC members.

Without any time being wasted, it was agreed upon that the VPA go ahead and consult with Mr. Nyahn to begin work on the website.

Mr. Nyahn offered to assist the Secretariat in that direction

Mr. Kula Jackson of the NGO Coalition spoke of lateness. He cautioned his colleagues to be mindful of time and encouraged them to please attend meetings on time.

At this point, a motion was passed and seconded by Mrs. Sely Williams that the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Twenty-six (26) persons attended the meeting including the VPA staff.

They include:

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| 1. Robert L. Nyahn | CSO |
| 2. William V. Page | Com. Rep. |
| 3. Joseph F. Mulbah | NIC |
| 4. Michael M. Robert | Com. Rep. |
| 5. George Kpawulu | Com. Rep. |
| 6. Lawrence Satia | MOF/BOC |
| 7. Kofi Ireland | UNMIL-CA |
| 8. Abraham M. Kromah | MOA |
| 9. Aaron N. Kota, Sr. | FDA |
| 10. Kula L. Jackson | NGO Coalition |
| 11. Isaac F. Mannah | LTA |
| 12. Edward S. Kamara | FDA |
| 13. William Gegeh | MOF/Customs |
| 14. Mulbah B. Sumo, Sr. | MOPEA |
| 15. Julie T.B. Weah | CSO |
| 16. James G. Otto, Jr. | SDI |
| 17. Rudolph J. Merab, Sr. | LTA |
| 18. Wesseh A. Wesseh | Liberian Senate |
| 19. Sely K. Williams | Com. Rep. |
| 20. Idella Cooper | MOJ |
| 21. Art Blundell | Consultant |
| 22. John T. Woods | FDA(Presiding Chairman) |
| 23. Amos T. Kofa | VPA |
| 24. Charles K. Miller | VPA |
| 25. F. Dadeh Harper | VPA |
| 26. Queta R.J-Hessou | VPA |