

**Liberia: Monthly Update
on VPA for NGOs and
Communities**

May 2009

The purpose of this monthly update for NGOs and communities is to keep non-governmental stakeholders informed about the Voluntary Partnership Negotiation process.

The Government of Liberia (GoL) and the European Union (EU) formally launched negotiations for a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on March 26 and 27, 2009.

The VPA, when concluded, will provide a framework for cooperation between the EU and the Liberia to tackle the problem of illegal logging.

The GoL will agree to only allow export of legal timber from Liberia to Europe and the EU will only allow legal timber from Liberia enter their markets; illegal timber will not be allowed into the EU.

The EU will also provide development assistance to Liberia to improve forest law enforcement and governance processes.

- 1.0 On April 1, 2009 representatives of twenty civil society organizations and other forest stakeholders institutions including Publish What You Pay Coalition of Liberia, NGO coalition of Liberia, UNMIL Civil Affairs, and Liberia Forest Initiatives attended a one-day meeting on FLEGT/ VPA organized by the **NGO Coalition for Liberia**. The meeting focused on civil society participation in the Voluntary Partnership Agreement negotiations.
- 2.0 The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a range of issues surrounding civil society inputs to the negotiations between the Government of Liberia and the European Union for a Voluntary Partnership Agreement or VPA.
- 3.0 The key outcomes of the meeting were (1) a draft civil society proposal with suggestions on the structure for stakeholder consultation; (2) a provisional directory of civil society actors interested in the VPA negotiation; (3) Alfred Brownell (Green Advocates) selected to represent civil society on the selection panel for the Technical Committee.
- 4.0 The following was also agreed during the meeting (1) next civil society meeting be held between the last week of April and the first week of May; (2) the Federation of Liberian Youths (FLY), Liberian Labor Congress, Liberia National Students Union (LINSU), Inter-Religious Council of Liberia and Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) be invited and encouraged to attend the next meeting.
- 5.0 The NGO Coalition, Human Concern, WANEP, COSH and GFFHR coordinate follow up activities and future facilitation of civil society.
- 6.0 The selection panel has been meeting to recruit staff for the Technical Committee. The positions are Coordinator, Office Manager and Secretary. The Coordinator has been recruited and the Selection Committee has started reviewing applications for the support staff.[1]
- 7.0 The next civil society meeting will be convened following the completion of the recruitment process but before the Steering Committee is constituted.[¹]

Note: This first Update is prepared by the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) and the Green Advocates. Subsequent updates will be prepared by the civil society facilitation group following the next meeting.

[1] A full report on the recruitment process will be available once the process has been completed.