

**EUROPEAN COMMUNITY-FOREST PLATFORM WORKSHOP ON CAMEROON-  
EUROPEAN UNION VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT  
Yaounde, AGESFO Centre, 21-22 September 2005**

**FINAL STATEMENT**

We, civil society organisations of the forest and environment sector and indigenous peoples organisations, meeting in Yaounde on 21 and 22 September 2005, within the framework of the European Community-Forest Platform (ECFP),

**Driven** by the momentum spurred by the Centre for the Environment and Development on the process of implementation of the European Union policy, especially the voluntary partnership agreement (VPA) between the Government of Cameroon and the European Union, within the framework of implementation of FLEGT (Forest Law enforcement, Governance and Trade) action plan,

**Mindful of the fact that,**

The Government of Cameroon has formally committed to negotiate a voluntary partnership agreement with the European Union to combat illegal forest exploitation,

In so doing, the GoC has prepared a roadmap with the support of the German technical cooperation (GTZ) to define actions to be carried out during the preparatory phase of negotiations towards the VPA,

Negotiating parties are clearly determined to involve national civil society organisations (NGOs, associations and organisations of indigenous peoples) in the process,

**Noting,**

The low-level of involvement of national civil society organisations (NGOs, associations and organisations of indigenous peoples) at this level in the process;

The lack of involvement of local and indigenous communities in the ongoing process;

The will of the Government of Cameroon and German technical cooperation (GTZ) to further involve national civil society organisations (NGOs, associations and organisations of indigenous peoples) in the process;

**Commit themselves**

to take an active part in the preparation, negotiation and implementation of the VPA.

**Recommend that,**

- The Government of Cameroon shall guarantee the legitimate representation of national civil society organisations (NGOs, associations and organisations of indigenous peoples)

in the process, which entails a distinction between representation of international NGOs and that of the national civil society;

- The funds earmarked for the national civil society within the framework of this process shall be allocated to a national civil society organisation designated by its peers;
- Representatives of the national civil society and indigenous peoples shall be specifically appointed to the various VPA preparation, negotiation and implementation fora;
- Representatives of the national civil society of the forest and environment sector shall only be appointed through the present platform, which is the basis for mobilising national civil society in the process and which remains open to the participation of any other relevant national civil society organisation;
- Customary rights-related aspects shall be incorporated in the definition of legality;
- All forest products (timber and non-timber) and wildlife shall be taken into account in the VPA;
- Legality certification shall not replace sustainability certification, but be considered as the first step towards the sustainable management of forests;
- Legality certification shall be compulsory for all forest sector operators, irrespective of the final destination of the products;
- National civil society shall be actively involved in the independent monitoring of legality certification;
- The partnership agreement shall also incorporate all forest products in transit in Cameroon;
- The Government of Cameroon and the European Union shall set up a funding mechanism to involve national civil society in process;
- The process of selecting an independent observer of legality certification shall be fair, transparent et mainstream the point of view of national civil society organisations (especially local and indigenous communities) and relevant monitoring and evaluation mechanisms shall be set up;
- Negotiating parties (Government of Cameroon, European Union, civil society, local and indigenous peoples, private sector, etc.) shall set up a joint review and arbitration body for litigation on legality certification.

**Done in Yaounde, on 22 September 2005,**

## The PARTICIPANTS

1. CED, Samuel Nguiffo
2. CERAD, Patrice Bigombe Logo
3. CEFAID, Victor Amougou
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11. OPED, Benoit Anthony Ndameu
12. OPAIDE, Honoré Nzol Bissack
13. GRIPE, Florence Mialomie
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