

PRESS Release
Monrovia, Liberia
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Failing reforms, government sanctioned illegal logging activities, and a new law seeking to waive at least USD\$200 million to logging companies adopted by the House of Representatives, are issues raised by some members of the NGO Coalition for Liberia¹ in a briefing paper released today.

The NGO coalition briefing paper raises questions about a new bill passed by the House of Representatives on 8 September 2010. The act, now before the Liberian Senate seeks to waive hundreds of millions of dollars in expected revenue as well as reward logging companies for pillaging Liberia's forests. It presents a snap shot of recent violations of the law and regulations regarding the handling of logs illegally harvested by Tarpeh Timber Company (TTC) in 2008. TTC harvested 100 pieces of logs outside of its concession, and without permission in late 2008 and early 2009. It exposes a key weakness in the Chain of Custody system; restricting the role of Societe Generale de Surveilliance (SGS/Liberfor) to simply collecting taxes and not asking questions. On at least two separate occasions SGS/ LiberFor, the firm managing the Liberian Chain of Custody system, has enrolled timber harvested in violation of the law into the system.

We call on the Liberian Senate to reject the act in its entirety. We also call on the Senate to immediately launch an investigation into the FDA's dismal performance and poor management of the forest sector of Liberia.

"The violations of the forestry law and regulations that characterize implementation of the forestry reform raise serious questions about whether the Government of Liberia is interested in addressing the problems of illegal logging or whether it is simply trying to green-wash illegal logs from Liberia by entering into a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union" says Kula Jackson of the NGO Coalition. *"The European Commission leading the negotiation with the Government of Liberia should therefore ensure that it is convinced of the government's commitment to combating illegal logging, as reflected in its actions, and not merely in words or policy statements on paper"* he concludes.

Julie Weah of the Foundation for Community Initiatives reiterating the NGOs concerns said *"the FDA must demonstrate that it is in control of managing Liberia's forest resources and not be regarded as mere pawn that can be driven by the whims and caprices of logging companies"*.

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¹ The NGO Coalition is a consortium of Liberian NGOs working to promote good governance and sustainable natural resource management in Liberia