

Minutes of the 9th Regular Meeting of the VPA Steering Committee
Tuesday, June 29, 2010
St. Theresa Convent Conference Hall
Randall Street, Monrovia

The meeting was called to order by Hon. Moses D. Wogbeh, Chairman of the VPA Steering Committee (SC).

Hon. Wogbeh read out the agenda and asked the body to make amendments if require. No amendment was made. A motion was obtained and seconded that the agenda be adopted for the meeting. It was then adopted for discussion.

The Chair requested for a prayer by a volunteer.

Minutes:

The minutes were reviewed quietly by each stakeholder attending the meeting. With no correction made the minutes were subsequently adopted.

Matters arising from the minutes:

The issue of the Executive Order was raised as the chairman of the SC gave a brief update. Hon. Wogbeh informed the body that progress is being made on the issuance of the Executive Order. He noted that Hon. Morris Saytumah and the VPA Legal Counselor are meeting regularly to have the VPA Executive Order issue as soon as possible.

The TS provided clarification for Mr. Kula Jackson of the CSO who complained that he could not connect page 4 of the June 29 minutes. He said he needed an explanation because according to him, he was confused of the sentence that mentioned his name of reacting harshly to the TS suggestion that observers should be silent during negotiation meetings. ***“(However, the CSO representative on the NT who is also an observer reacted harshly in disagreement. Mr. Kula Jackson said that such statement is a joke and not a reality).”***

Mr. Kofa referred Mr. Jackson to page 3 of the June 29 minutes and cautioned stakeholders to read the minutes carefully before attending meetings. He emphasized the reason for which the TS circulate the minutes at least one week before meetings are held.

Still on matters arising from the minutes, Mr. Isaac Mannah of the Industry expressed disappointment in the behavior of CSO representatives. He said it has become frequent for CSO representatives to make threatening statements during SC meetings. Mr. Mannah admonished the fact that the GoL is not exhibiting the needed leadership role as required but said it does not warrant threats from any stakeholder. He made reference to page 3, paragraph 3 of the 8th regular minutes of the VPA SC meeting where (*Atty. Alfred Brownell said the CSO will have to take a decision to step aside because according to him, that kind of attitude undermines their efforts*). Atty. Brownell Statement was made in reference to the discussion on GoL's reluctant attitude towards the VPA Process.

The presiding chairman buttressed Mr. Mannah's point and advised CSO representatives to dis-engage from making threaten statements.

Cllr. Sylvester Gbeintor of the Ministry of Justice blamed the Government for incorporating other organizations and institutions into government activity. He said it is solely the prerogative of the Government of Liberia to invite who ever or whatever institution she deems necessary with her activities. The MOJ representative however encouraged observers to attend stakeholders meetings regularly, which he believes will give them the opportunity to speak out their concerns or on the contrary jot down points during negotiations and pass it on to those who are allow to speak if it is a pressing issue. He re-affirmed that the negotiation is between the Government of Liberia and the European Union.

Harmonized ToR:

Mr. Robert Nyahn of the CSO raised a concern about the harmonized version of the VPA ToR. He indicated that the harmonized ToR was signed several meetings ago but still cannot understand why it has not been distributed to SC members. Mr. Nyahn believes the ToR will serve as a guide for everyone.

The TS clarified that every member on the ToR committee had signed and initialed the document accept Mrs. Julie Weah who represented the CSO on the committee but was not in the country to sign the document. Mr. Kofa said for the fact that every member did not signed the document, makes it incomplete for the committee to present. He then assured the body that the harmonized ToR will be presented to

stakeholders during the next regular meeting of the SC, and copies will be available for everyone.

Update on LAS working group activities:

The LAS work plan could not be presented in the absence of the Legality Definition working group retreat. The TS said plans are underway for another retreat for LD members which will enable them discuss the Draft LD. The TS informed the body that the process has reached the point where the LD and LAS working groups have to work simultaneously.

When asked for a guaranteed that the LD will meet in any way to discuss the Draft LD, members of the LD group assured the body that decision will be taken to have the retreat even in the absence of its chairperson.

- **Terms of Reference for Liberia Independent Audit**

The issue of the ToR for the Independent Audit was discussed. The TS provided update. Mr. Charles Miller said that the TS had been working along with SGS to ensure that the document is prepared. The body was also assured that copies of the Liberia Independent Audit will be circulated via emails for stakeholders input.

- **Terms of Reference for Verification Procedure Expert**

The TS informed the SC that the ToR for a consultant on verification procedure has been drafted for the chairman's approval. The TS emphasized that the job requires applicant to be a lawyer.

Update on LD working group activities

Discussion on the VPA budget and setting up of budget committee:

The Coordinator of the TS requested the SC to set up a budget committee to review the TS budget. Mr. kofa indicated that Government should provide a portion of the budget for the TS operations. He said the TS need additional funding for community empowerment. It was agreed that the budget committee which was constituted by the former Chairman of the SC, Hon. Woods, remain but should include Atty. Alfred Brownell.

Members of Committee are as follows:

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| 1. Mr. Rudolph J. Merab | Industry - Co-chair (SC) |
| 2. Mr. Lawrence N. Satia | MOF Rep. |
| 3. Mr. George F. Kpawulu | COM Rep. |
| 4. Kula L. Jackson | NGO Coalition |
| 5. Kofi Ireland | UNMIL Civil Affairs Department |
| 6. Alfred L. Brownell | CSO |

At this point, Mr. Jackson recorded that the NT chairman had earlier made commitments on behalf of GoL in previous meetings. He said if for any reason(s) Hon. Chenoweth has relax in fulfilling these commitments, she should be reminded in a written communication. The CSO representative stressed that government must shoulder her responsibilities.

Development & designing of website

The TS disclosed to the SC its intention to manage her own website. Mr. Kofa informed the SC that the TS was presently being hosted on a general website which is managed by Mr. Robert Nyahn. Meanwhile, Mr. Nyahn justified that the website is worldwide and shares information from different institutions and organizations. He emphasized that the TS claimed not have enough money in the budget for other activities that are more essential, therefore there is no need for extra website which will cost additional money. He however suggested that the TS remain on the present website which is cost free. He was buttressed by his colleagues from Green Advocates and the NGO Coalition.

Some members of the SC including Cllr. Gbeintor and William Gegeh were in agreement to the TS request, while others were against. This argument continued for a while resulting that a hold be put on the matter until the next regular SC meeting.

Schedule for Joint SC & NT meeting (July 6th) to prepare for negotiations:

The TS announced a called meeting for the NT and SC in preparation for the 3rd round of negotiations between the GoL and the EU which is scheduled to take place in Liberia.

Schedule for Negotiations:

The TS informed the body that the date for the negotiation has change from July 6 to the 12, 2010.

AOB:

Mr. William Page spoke on behalf of platform 2. He made available a mini-budget for the SC's approval. He said if the budget is approved, the activity will be implemented in collaboration with the TS. He noted that the people of Rivercess and Grand Bassa Counties want to make their input on the Legality Definition. The budget was however presented to the TS for onward implementation. But the TS maintained that platforms activities are organized and sponsored by the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI). Mr. Kofa said it would be prudent if the community representative could begin from having consultative meetings with SDI.

Still on other matters, the TS informed the body that it has in its possession a copy of SDI letter to Hon. Wogbeh informing the SC that SDI will no longer facilitate Mr. Michael Roberts travel from Grand Cape Mount County to Monrovia. Mr. Kofa disclosed that SDI said they have conducted investigation and it has been proven that Mr. Robert does not live in Grand Cape Mount instead he lives in Monrovia. However, SDI said it will be obligated to transport Mr. Robert within Monrovia.

With that report, some members of the SC appealed to the TS to continue to give Mr. Robert his just benefit while investigation is ongoing, but Cllr. Sylvester Gbeintor of the MOJ insisted that the TS put a stay order on Mr. Roberts transportation allowance until an investigation is conducted and findings brought to the next regular SC meeting.. He added that the allegation leveled against Mr. Robert is criminal and must not be ignored.

After several views from across the table, it was agreed that a committee be set up to investigate the allegation. Meanwhile, Michael will not be invited to any VPA function until the investigation is concluded. Members of the committee include:

- Mr. Kula L. Jackson CSO - Chairman
- Mr. Robert Nyhan CSO
- Mr. Jeremaih Karmo FDA

At this juncture the meeting was adjourned.

Nineteen (20) persons were in attendance.

Ministry of Finance

1. Mr. Lawrence Satia Bureau of Concession

Ministry of Justice

1. Cllr. Sylvester Gbeintor

Forestry Development Authority

1. Hon. Moses D. Wogbeh Chairman SC
2. Mr. Jeremiah F. Karmo
3. Mr. Albert Brewer

Community Representatives

1. Mr. William V. Page Rivercess County
2. Mr. Michael M. Robert Grand Cape Mount County
3. Mr. George F. Kpawulu Gbarpolu County
4. Mr. Sollie K. George River Gee County
5. Mr. Michael Sayee Maryland County

Industry

1. Mr. Isaac Mannah Liberia Timber Association

Civil Society Organizations

1. Ms. Lydia B. Williams FCI
2. Mr. Robert L. Nyahn SAMFU
3. Ms. Mai E. Saryeh LDI

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| 4. Mr. Maxwell Nyounway | Green Advocates |
| 5. Mr. Kula L. Jackson | NGO Coalition |

Technical Secretariat

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| 1. Mr. Amos T. Kofa | VPA |
| 2. Mr. Charles K. Miller | |
| 3. Mr. F. Dadeh Harper | |
| 4. Mrs. Queta R.J-Hessou | |