

6th Regular Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 23, 2010 Held in the Board Room of the FDA
Congo Town, Monrovia

The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:35 p.m. by the Chairman of the Steering Committee Hon. John T. Woods. Mr. Woods began the meeting by introducing to the body Mr. Moses Wogbeh as his successor and urged him to stand up to the challenge. The presiding Chairman further thanked the Steering Committee for the opportunity afforded him to serve as Chair and promised to give his continuous support to the VPA process where necessary. He then requested for a prayer which was offered by Mr. Rudolph Merab of the LTA.

The Chairman thereafter presented the agenda for the meeting and asked for amendment if any. The agenda was adopted with no amendment made.

WELCOME REMARK:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and emphasized the importance of the meeting. He informed the SC about the Negotiation that was scheduled for early March, 2010. He further announced a planned meeting with the Negotiating Team and noted that as the negotiation period drew closer, the NT representatives would need to be fully informed about the process. He emphasized that the planned NT meeting would highlight the agenda for the negotiation and other important issues that would be discussed.

ADOPTION OF THE LAST MEETING MINUTES (JAN. 26.10)

The minutes were read page by page and thereafter, the necessary corrections were made. It was then moved and seconded that the minutes be adopted. The minutes were then adopted.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

The CSO frowned on a statement made by one of the observers from GoL Mr. Mulbah Sumo. According to Mr. Sumo, he said that the CSO was always in the habit of throwing meetings backward when progress is being made. Mr. Kula Jackson of the NGO's Coalition said such statement has the tendency to cause confusion and mixed feelings. He said, when the GoL's Representative said that

the CSO are known for throwing meetings backward, the CSO also reacted to Mr. Sumo but the Secretariat did not record that in the minutes, something Mr. Jackson classified as being partial. When asked to clarify what was said by the CSO, Mrs. Julie Weah of the Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI) said the CSO's reaction was that the CSO was not throwing meeting backward, instead they were putting things in the right place.

The issue of hiring a national consultant to help speed up the process as was suggested in the last SC meeting in January was raised. The Technical Secretariat (TS) was mandated by the SC to begin the recruitment process by advertising the post.

Hon. Wogbeh made reference to the issue raised in the last meeting by Mr. Brownell concerning observer's status on the Steering Committee. In response to the issue Mr. Merab indicated that the GoL has the right to bring as many persons it wants to bring as observer. This was buttressed by Mr. Woods. On the contrary, the LDI boss said that Mr. Merab's statement was not factual because the VPA process is centered around stakeholders. Mr. Woods in concluding the issue said that both statements were correct. However, the issue of observer was never resolved.

It was agreed on that "matters arising from the minutes should be included on every agenda of the SC meetings as an agenda item.

It was then moved and seconded that the minutes be adopted and formed part of the SC's archives.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEE ON ToRs:

The TS Coordinator reported that the committee did not work as expected by the SC. He said the meeting did not go on because representatives from the Industry complained that unless Cllr. Alfred Brownell was a part of the meeting they (Industry) was not prepared to brainstorm and decide on something which they assume will be rejected by Mr. Brownell in the future. This action on the part of the committee was seen as a total disappointment and disrespect to the SC. However, the committee apologized to the SC for such disappointment. The Chair on behalf of the SC accepted the apology and asked the committee to go back and

work on the ToR. The SC asked Miss Victoria Cole to lead the process and ensure that a chair be appointed. The committee was expected to meet on March 18, 2010.

REPORT FROM STAKEHOLDERS: (FEEDBACK)

At this point every stakeholder was confused about this agenda item. Though the TS Coordinator tried to justify this agenda item, it was defected since in fact the Secretariat send out the proposed agenda which did not include this agenda item. It was then agreed on that all information be sent out weeks before SC meeting to enable stakeholders prepare a comprehensive report from their constituencies which will be reported at SC meeting.

Briefly under Reports from Stakeholder groups, the Industry recommended Capacity Building to be included on the agenda for negotiation. Mr. Merab made specify reference to renovation of the school in Bomi County.

Community Representative Sollie George of River Gee County appealed to the SC for empowerment to enable Community Representatives tour their counties as part of their duties. He said if they don't visit their areas they wouldn't be able to get response from community members and the SC will not be updated.

Mr. George Kpawulu of Gbarpolu County spoke of the approved budget by the SC which gave the TS the right to spend money up to March 2010.

In response to Mr. Kpawulu's concern, the TS Office and Finance Manager, Mr. F.D. Harper clarified that despite the approved budget by the SC, the TS will not spend money on community capacity building or community empowerment unless those communities involved identify areas of the capacity need. This must be supported by a written project proposal. He furthered urged community representatives to make a reasonable and justifiable budget in submitting their project proposals.

REPORT FROM LAS WORKING GROUP:

The Coordinator of the TS Mr. Amos T. Kofa presented a comprehensive document referred to as **"A Draft Scope of the Legality Assurance System for**

Liberia”. The document which was viewed page by page outlined various significant points that include:

- ✚ Timber Sources and Contract/Concession Allocation Procedures
- ✚ Verification Body for Legality
- ✚ Forest contract holders/contract areas, forest owners/forest holdings and timber processors/processing sites
- ✚ FLEGT Licensing
- ✚ Independent Monitoring as well as
- ✚ Monitoring and Evaluation

These sub-topics in the LAS Scope were deliberated on extensively as reflected in the document which was placed in the folders of each SC member.

AOB

Executive Order:

Mr. Kofa briefed the body on the status of the Executive Order. The TS Coordinator told participants at the SC meeting that after several visits to the Executive Mansion, Mr. Saytumah told the Secretariat that it would be more preferable for the President to make a Proclamation instead of an Executive Order which according to Mr. Kofa the Secretariat does not have any problem with. However, the SC Chairman Hon. Woods was scheduled to visit the President’s office to make another follow up. He said this time he was sure of succeeding.

Introduction of Community Representative:

Ms. Mai Saryeh of the Liberia Democratic Institute (LDI) who serves as focal person for VPA process in the south east introduced Mr. Michael Sayee as the last Community Representative on the SC. She said Mr. Sayee represents Platform 4 which include; Grand Kru, Maryland and portion of River Gee Counties. Ms. Saryeh has been conducting community’s elections in the south eastern areas since the VPA process began. Mr. Sayee was welcomed by the Presiding Chairman to the SC and urged him to work hard as the communities are very important in the VPA process.

At this point the meeting was adjourned by the Presiding Chairman.

Madam Laura L. Benneh who represented the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs offered the closing prayer.

The following persons attended the meeting:

1. Joseph F. Mulbah NIC
2. Teyah S. Moore Green Advocates
3. Nora Bowier SDI
4. Moses D. Wogbeh FDA
5. Julie T.B. Weah FCI/CSO
6. Kula L. Jackson NGO Coalition/CSO
7. Laura L. Benneh MPEA
8. Wesseh A. Wesseh Liberian Senate
9. Rudolph J. Merab LTA
10. Isaac F. Mannah LTA
11. Michael M. Roberts Comm. Rep.
12. George F. Kpawulu Comm. Rep.
13. Sollie K. George Comm. Rep.
14. Mai E. Saryeh LDI
15. Enoch G. Payzine FDA
16. Edward S. Kamara FDA
17. Victoria Cole FDA
18. Thomas Z. Barleh Comm. Rep.
19. Michael Sayee Comm. Rep.
20. John T. Woods FDA
21. Albert Dioh Brewer FDA
22. Charles K. Miller VPA-Secretariat
23. Amos T. Kofa VPA-Secretariat
24. F. Dadeh Harper VPA-Secretariat
25. Queta R. Johnson-Hessou VPA-Secretariat