

To:
Government of Liberia
Government of Cameroon
Government of Gabon

23 September 2024

Subject: Act now for healthy and just Community Forests

Dear Decision Makers,

We are reaching out to you to highlight the pressing issues surrounding Community Forest Management within the West and Central African region. Enclosed with this letter, you will find a briefing document detailing how the appropriation of forest resources by elites and corporations jeopardizes the rights and livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities. This challenge of corporate and elite capture is prevalent across West and Central Africa, and demands your attention and action.

Community Forests hold immense potential to strengthen the rights of and empower Indigenous Peoples and local communities, thereby fostering social stability and local economies through responsible practices and the conservation of forests and biodiversity.

During the Community Forest application process, logging companies, often in collaboration with elites and intermediaries, unduly influence decisions, securing forest rights to the detriment of local communities. Consequently, communities are left without adequate benefits or control over their forests, while a select few profit at their expense. This situation not only weakens the economic and social situation of communities, but also accelerates the loss of biodiversity and the destruction of natural habitats.

This is aggravated by weak regulations with loopholes and gaps that favour logging in Community Forests and the absence of government support to communities. Consequently, while on paper, your government supports community forest management, the reality is that communities are not benefiting and robbed from their forests and its resources.

We implore you to publicly acknowledge these widespread challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples and local communities and take decisive action to ensure that Community Forests genuinely benefit those they are intended to serve, rather than serving the interests of elites and corporations. In our briefer we recommend clear steps forward and we look forward to discuss these with you.

Kind Regards,

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Signed:

AJESH

Alternatives

ARA - Germany

Asociatia Neuer Weg / Romania

Association pour le Développement Durable (ADD) / Côte d'Ivoire

Biedriba Puse Latvijas

Blessings Of The Forest - Gabon

CEDLA

Civil Society Independent Forest Monitors

Congo Basin Conservation Society CBCS network DRC

Coopérative pilule mossi de Bemboudie

Dem (FOE MACEDONIA)

Earth Thrive

ECODEV

Fern

Forests Now!

Forum pour la Conscience et le Développement (FOCODE)

Forum Ökologie & Papier

Foundation for Community Initiatives

Foundation for Good Governance and Democratic Initiative

Friedrich ebert Stiftung

Friends of the Earth United States

Fusion Nature

Green Development Advocates

Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement

JVE Côte d'Ivoire

Les Amis de la Terre-Togo

MINAPYGA

National Union of Community Forestry Development Committees _ NUCFDCs

Pro Natura - FoE Switzerland

Radd

Rainforest Action Network

RECTRAD

Reseau De Lutte Contre la Faim (RELUFA)

Réseau des Forêts communautaires du Sud

Réseau des organisations des jeunes engagés dans le changement climatique, conservation de la biodiversité, zones humides et forêts en RDC

Rettet den Regenwald

Rural Integrated Center for Community Empowerment

SAILD

Save My Future Foundation

Si Afane Da'an

Siemenpuu - Foundation for Social Movements' Cooperation sr

Société civile environnementale et agro-rurale du Congo (Socearuco)

Sustainable Development Institute

TRAFFED-RDC, ASBL

YOUNG VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (YVE GABON)