

# STATEMENT BY HON. ALHAJI COLLINS DAUDA, MINISTER FOR LANDS & NATURAL RESOURCES, AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE VPA MULTI-STAKEHOLDER IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE ON 18<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2010

Hon. Henry Ford Kamel Deputy Minister MLNR  
Alhaji Ahmed Bin Salih Chief Director MLNR  
Mr. Samuel Afari Dartey Ag. CEO Forestry Commission  
Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

As you may be aware, the Ghana-EU VPA is now a ratified agreement. The development of systems and procedures to ensure that Ghana delivers to the requirement of the agreement is in progress. You may be aware that in terms of scheduling, these systems are not being developed at the leisure of the Forestry Commission or Ghana for that matter.

There are set time frames within which the various elements of the agreement ought to be delivered. Again you may also be aware that the agreement provides for a review mechanism jointly served by the two parties. This review mechanism known as the Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism, JMRM, is to oversee the implementation of the Agreement.

The first session of the JMRM was recognised to have brought renewed dynamism to the VPA process. The timeframes for the implementation of the various elements of the agreement were revisited. The commitment to meeting these timelines was renewed by the two parties. In short, we have an agreement with requirements to which Ghana must deliver.

We are aware that Ghana gained international recognition in the way in which she organised stakeholders during the preparatory or pre-negotiation phase of the VPA. While basking in that recognition, we also want to call to mind the lessons learned from the process.

We can all agree that there can always be a point of convergence on policy issues if we put our minds to it. I believe this is one of the cardinal lessons that stand out of the VPA process. The fact that we are coming from different stakeholder domains should therefore not mean our differences in opinion cannot be bridged.

We can let our immediate past guide us into a journey of discovery of what transparent and honest dialoguing on issues can achieve. As this committee comes together, we should therefore be building on our successes rather than re-inventing the wheel. I am informed that some of the members on this present committee have been carried over from the pre-negotiation VPA steering committee. I believe some form of continuity is therefore assured.

Let me now draw your attention to the requirements of the agreement. The VPA legality standard requires producers to comply with the country's laws governing the allocation, harvesting, transport, processing and tax obligations for the export of timber consignments. While it is clear that we have entered into an agreement that makes it obligatory to issue

timber legality export licenses or FLEGT licenses as the agreement calls it, we should not lose sight of the fact that there are other targets that we seek to achieve with the VPA.

These other targets include improvements in the governance environment of the sector which should ultimately yield dividends in the sustainable management of the resource. The development and regulation of the domestic market is one such key sector governance issue. I will therefore encourage you to keep these objectives in mind as you begin deliberations on the implementation of the different aspects of the VPA.

I will also urge you to keep abreast with the trends on the international markets which continue to adopt more sophisticated requirements in timber trading. Under the VPA, Ghana's commitment is to issue timber legality licenses. We are, however, aware that procurement policies of European Union member states are being geared towards not only legality but also towards sustainability. These policy developments and market trends must be kept in view.

Your terms of reference to perform the above task is as follows:

1. Oversee the overall implementation of the VPA and co-ordinate the delivery of outputs of the various task teams to ensure that the objectives are achieved in line with the content and time schedule in the agreement
2. Ensure that the implementation of the VPA continues to be linked to the national aspirations of forest and wildlife management as well as Ghana's obligations under other international conventions
3. Maintain open communication channels with all stakeholding constituencies on the implementation of the VPA
4. Prepare the grounds for the work of the Joint Monitoring Review Mechanism (JMRRM)
5. Any other function that may be assigned the committee.

The membership of the Committee will be as follows (Attached Sheet)

The committee will report to the Ministry.

I wish to thank you sincerely for accepting to serve on this committee and trust that you find the learning experience worthwhile in the process of contributing your best to the course of mother Ghana. With this I hereby declare the VPA Multi-Stakeholder Implementation Committee duly inaugurated.

Thank You.