

Communique issued at the National Stakeholder Forum on the Implementation of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests

the “Forest Instrument” in Ghana

held on 3 and 4 November, 2009 at MPLAZA Hotel, Accra

We the stakeholders of the forestry sector are recognizing the strenuous efforts the Government of Ghana in collaboration with development partners is making to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of the forest and wildlife resources of the country. We believe that the principal objective is to ensure perpetual flow of benefits to all segments of the Ghanaian society for now and the future.

We acknowledge that currently the forestry sector is the fourth largest foreign exchange earner and also contributes about 7% of GDP. We also recognize the fact that the sector provides employment to more than 200,000 people in the formal sector and supports the livelihoods of more than 2.5m people in local communities in particular.

We also note that it is an important sector with enormous potential to contribute to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

We however contend that this important sector is being undermined by several significant challenges which are threatening the livelihood of local communities who depend on the forest. The challenges include the following:

- Alarming rate of deforestation of more than 65,000ha/pa
- Over-exploitation of the forest and wildlife resources;
- Unsustainable agricultural practices
- Expansion in infrastructural and urban settlements;
- Mining;
- And other competing land uses

We acknowledge the fact that as part of measures to address these challenges, the Government of Ghana adopted and is implementing the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (NLBI) of the United Nations, which is also known as the Forest Instrument. It is a global framework for which Ghana is the first to adopt and implement in a multi stakeholder process.

The Instrument is a tool that allows countries to systematically assess their strengths and weaknesses and gaps in the implementation of their respective national forest programme and to subsequently formulate action plans to address them.

The Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Forestry Commission in collaboration with the UN FAO National Forest Programme Facility, the National Forestry Forum, the Growing Forest Partnerships Initiative and with financial support from the German Federal

Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, organized three separate regional stakeholder workshops, which culminated in a national stakeholder forum on the Instrument.

In the four workshops we systematically assess where Ghana stands in respect of the implementation of the national policies and measures of the Forest Instrument.

We stakeholders have therefore identified several policies and measures of the Forest Instrument, which the Government of Ghana had insufficiently addressed in the implementation of the National Forest Programme. However, the following are the key priority areas that need critical and urgent attention:

- Promote cross-sectoral coordination for sustainable forest management
- Strengthen law enforcement;
- Develop effective financial strategies for sustainable forest management;
- Further develop and implement the National Forest Programme and ensure its integration into the national development programmes (e.g. GPRS);

In addition we stakeholders have identified three cross-cutting issues which should be taken into account during implementation in various partnerships. These are Gender, Education, Science and Technology.

We therefore urge the Government of Ghana in collaboration with development partners and other stakeholders to mobilize the necessary resources and political will to address these priorities to ensure that Ghana makes progress towards sustainable forest management.