

## Press Release

### ASSOCIATION OF FORESTERS PNG SUPPORT THE NEW FORESTRY (AMENDMENT) BILL 2005

The executive management of the Association of Foresters PNG have closely been observing the ongoing public debate over the Forestry (Amendment) Bill 2005, and after carefully examining the proposed amendments it is of the view that the proposed amendments has not in any way attempted to deny or take away the rights of the resource owners or the provincial government authorities regarding their rights to be consulted and/or to participate in the decisions and decision making processes of forest resource acquisition and allocation.

The Association views the proposed amendments to be positive as these will streamline and improve the legal and technical process for facilitating forest development in the country.

“We do not see or agree with the views of some of the commentators that the proposed amendments is going to deny or take away the rights of the resource owners and the provincial governments in relation to the allocation of a timber permit. Such views and statements are unsubstantiated and misleading. We would like to encourage open and objective debate that will help and improve public knowledge about the application of the Forestry Act rather than sensitizing and misleading resource owners about the true intentions of the amendments.”

The legal requirements of Section 59 in our view are adequately manifested in all sections of the principal Act from Sections 60 to Sections 72. Unless the Act is read in its totality, one cannot appreciate and comprehend the extent to which resource owners and provincial authorities having the commending leadership in the acquisition and allocation of their timber resources.

With regards to Section 137 of the Forestry Act 1991, this is a transitional provision which in our view was purposely enacted to save and continue the activities of timber permits and licenses approved under previous legislations now repealed. With numerous experiences that most landowners prefer logging operations to continue rather than letting them expire, the proposed amendments will enable the resource owner's desires for continuity to occur. Extension of timber permits cannot be done in any other way or using Section 78 of the Act because of the sustainability issue that affects all existing projects. The proposed amendment to Section 137 is considered a responsible move and one that would ensure extension of expired saved timber permits are done correctly and legally.

With regard to amending membership to the National Forest Board, whilst the Association did not approve the manner by which the Minister and the Chairman of the Forest Board dealt with the matter, it recognized the basis for such changes in the light of the many community based NGO involved in the forestry sector. Some of these NGOs may or may not be members of the EF, and therefore, the Association view the rational of the proposed amendment is not to rid off the EFF altogether, but is aimed at broadening the representation of the NGO groups on the Board of which EFF is one of such organizations and if the NGOs (national and community based) choose to have a representative from EFF as their representative, it will be their decision.

Overall, the Association disagree and described it irresponsible and misleading by various commentators that the propose amendments is unconstitutional. The proposed amendment does not deny rights of resource owners and/or provincial authorities or vest more powers with the Forest Board or the Minister.

The Association views the proposed Amendment Bill to be in the national interest, and therefore supports it and urges all members of Parliament to pass it.

Authorized by: Kanawi Pouru  
President