

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A STAKEHOLDERS FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE, REDD AND FOREST DEPENDENT COMMUNITY RIGHTS.

IKOM, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

28 FEBRUARY – 2ND MARCH, 2011.

Green Concern for Development, GREENCODE a Calabar based Non Governmental Organization in collaboration with Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria ERA/FoEN, have organized a forum on Climate Change, REDD & Forest Dependent Community Rights at Ikom, Cross River State, in south-south Nigeria.

The forum, supported by Global Greengrants Fund GGF, was aimed at sharing and building local knowledge on the facts about **REDD** (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), as well as raise awareness and build consciousness among forest dependent peoples and other relevant stakeholders on the subject.

The 37-member participants at the all-engaging session were drawn from the 3-REDD targeted areas of Mbe Afi, Ekuri and mangrove forest blocks in Cross River State. Others include representatives of community based organizations, civil society organisations, Cross River State forestry commission, forest dependent communities, and concerned individuals.

THE FORUM HAD THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES

1. To share knowledge on climate change and its impact on the people
2. To enlighten stakeholders on the implications of REDD
3. To improve stakeholders understanding on strategies of protecting their rights in the REDD process.
4. To build a critical mass of stakeholders knowledge in climate change, REDD and community peoples rights.

After exhaustive deliberations by participants;

THE FORUM OBSERVED:

1. That adverse impacts of climate change manifests in extreme weather events such as cyclones, flood, inundation of low lying coastal areas on one hand and drought, prolonged water shortages on the other hand and heat wave increase.
2. That climate change impacts greatly on women who depend on ecosystem for their livelihood, reduces their income and thus makes them poorer
3. That indigenous people have the right to give or withhold their consent to any activity on their land of heritage.
4. That the Nigerian state abstained from voting in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples thus denying forest dependent communities their rights as enshrined in the declaration
5. Forest dependent peoples who have been the original custodian of their native forest have not been engaged or incorporated adequately by government in the REDD negotiation process.

6. That indigenous forest dependent peoples fear that government would dispose of their forests and cause their displacement without adequate empowerment for sustainable livelihood alternatives.
7. REDD involves carbon trading and market mechanisms
8. Commercial plantations are not the same as forests.

THE FORUM RECOMMENDS

1. That the free prior informed consent of all stakeholders of indigenous communities targeted for REDD should be adequately sought before any initiative as the REDD process is implemented
2. That communities and civil society should apply caution in embracing the REDD initiative in the country rather they should continue to champion social and environmental justice of forest dependent communities
3. That the ongoing REDD negotiations must sufficiently involve all stakeholders.
4. That the Nigerian Land Use Act of 1978 should be reviewed.
5. Forest dependent communities should set out clearly defined preconditions for negotiations to secure their interests and sustenance before REDD initiatives take off in the communities especially a demand for a thorough environmental impact assessment.
6. Massive public awareness on climate change, REDD and community peoples' rights should be scaled up in forest dependent communities by CSOs and government agencies.
7. That all stakeholders including CSOs, forest dependent communities should strengthen their governance structures to make it more participatory of every segment of their institution.
8. Stakeholders should continue to develop and implement action plans across all parts of Nigeria to reduce deforestation and not to focus only on Cross River State as a result of REDD which may lead to undue pressure on the pilot forest dependent communities.
9. That civil society organizations, forest dependent communities should build their capacity to effectively engage in climate change, REDD and the rights of the indigenous peoples as informed partners

THE FORUM RESOLVED

1. To unite our efforts to jointly advocate to policy makers our above stated recommendations and others recommendations that are jointly adopted.
2. To exchange appropriate information on REDD, climate change and the rights of indigenous peoples for the defense of communities.

3. To continue to effectively engage and dialogue with the UN agencies, FG, CRSG on climate change, REDD and the right of indigenous forest dependent communities.

CONCLUSION

The REDD process in Nigeria is moving fast consultation by United Nations agencies, the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Cross River State government with civil society organizations and forest dependent communities began less than two years ago and before the middle of 2011, the draft REDD+ Readiness Plan will be approved by the United Nations without sufficient and meaningful inputs from all relevant stakeholders to ensure that REDD does not lead to social conflict or undue exploitation of the forest dependent communities where REDD pilot project will be executed.

ENDORSEMENT

On behalf of Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria, **ERA/FoEN** and Green Concern for Development **GREENCODE**, we hereby endorse this communiqué.

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