

Greenpeace Statement to Meeting, 14th April, 2007
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First of all I would like to thank the organizers for inviting us, and for organizing this event.

As you know, significant decisions regarding the future of the rainforests of the Democratic Republic of Congo will be made in the next few months. These decisions, if they are the wrong ones, are likely to be irreversible, and will have profoundly negative impacts on communities, biodiversity and the global climate.

To help inform these decision, we have recently released a report, Carving Up the Congo, which documents the results of a two year investigation, conducted with the assistance of our Congolese NGO colleagues, which illustrates an industry that is out of control and is driving, rather than alleviating poverty.

Specifically, our investigations have found that over 100 logging titles, covering approximately 15 million hectares of rainforest have been allocated in contravention of the 2002 moratorium; that social conflict where these titles exist, rather than being an exception, is the rule, with access rights to forests being traded away for bags of salt, sugar and crates of beer, and for promises of development that are not delivered; and with none of the forest taxes paid by the industry making its way back to communities.

These conflicts are matched by the virtual absence of capacity for governance, with government officials responsible for monitoring logging operations often dependent on the logging companies they are supposed to be monitoring in order to do their work.

The conclusions that these findings lead us to are quite clear- that industrial logging in the DRC is failing, much as it has throughout the rest of Central Africa, and that specific actions need to be taken. In terms of specific actions that need to be taken, and I am glad to hear that many of these items seem to have been noted by a number of the speakers-

- All illegally allocated titles, which we have documented as 15 million hectares, must be removed, with their removal enforced and necessary support given to the Congolese government and communities to ensure this will happen with a minimum of social disruption;

- The moratorium on the allocation of new titles be extended into the foreseeable future;

- And in those titles deemed legal, which we estimate at 5 million hectares, comprehensive and participatory eco-regional land use planning, taking into account biodiversity and the climate, the needs and expressed wishes of local communities, and including a network of protected areas, be the basis for any logging operations;

- And last, significant international effort is made to develop practical economic alternatives to industrial logging in the DRC.

The solutions will not be immediate, and we should expect that it will take some time to find them.

Success or failure will to our minds be judged by how well the international community and the Bank ensure these conditions are realized, and that the intentions stated by many of you today are translated into action in the forest.