

Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Ministry of Environment,  
Nature Conservation and Tourism

ADDRESS GIVEN BY THE  
SECRETARY GENERAL FOR  
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION  
TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE  
WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF PHASES FOLLOWING THE PROCESS TO  
CONVERT OLD LOGGING TITLES INTO  
NEW FOREST CONCESSION CONTRACTS

= Hotel Memling, 6 March 2009 =

- Honourable Minister of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism
- Distinguished Facilitator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)
- Mr President of the Interafrican Forest Industries Association (IFIA)
- Distinguished representative of the Executive Secretary of the Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (Central African Forest Commission – COMIFAC)
- Distinguished donor representatives
- Distinguished representatives of national and international non-governmental organisations
- Distinguished participants
- Ladies and gentlemen

At the close of this workshop on the implementation of the phases following the process undertaken to convert old logging titles into new forest concession contracts, which has brought together the stakeholders involved in the process of legally reviewing existing logging permits and converting them into forest concession contracts for the sustainable management of the forests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to take the opportunity to extend my sincerest thanks to all the participants for their diligent efforts in the group work and the proactive debates, which have firmly paved the way for the effective and concrete implementation of decisions based on the work of the Interministerial Commission on the conversion of old logging titles into forest concession contracts.

I would also like to reassure the stakeholders, particularly donors, national and international civil society organisations and the private sector, that, in spite of the difficulties encountered in carrying out the priority reform agenda and establishing implementing measures for the

Forest Code, the Forest Authority is determined, today more than ever, to work tirelessly to promote good forest governance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

However, there are a number of international non-governmental organisations today who clearly think that they are qualified to give lessons to the Forest Authority of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and use the Congolese forests as a business for their respective governments and supporters.

On this subject, I am also taking the liberty of affirming, from this rostrum before your august assembly, that the satisfactory results already achieved to date confirm the very significant advances made by the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism in the area of forest governance. By way of illustration, I would like to highlight some of these achievements, which include the completion of the implementing measures for the Forest Code, the legal review of old logging titles and the conversion process, the institutional review of the Forest Authority and its institutions, the range of legal measures established to ensure environmental management and protection and nature conservation, the improvement of protected areas, the trust fund to be launched shortly for the management of protected areas, the call for expressions of interest for the long-term recruitment of an independent observer to monitor forest management, the terms of reference for the preparation of a guide on negotiations to establish the social and environmental responsibility clauses attached to forest concession contracts (*cahiers des charges*),

the terms of reference for the technical assistance provided to the Minister of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism to deal with the administrative proceedings resulting from the legal review of old logging titles, the terms of reference for the support provided to implement decisions to reject conversion applications and cancel old logging titles in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the progressive implementation of the forest and nature conservation project, the social and environmental impact survey, which outlines various frameworks, particularly with regard to environmental and social management, policy on indigenous peoples, involuntary resettlement policy, cultural heritage management, the operating framework, etc.

All these efforts, undertaken under the direction of Mr José Endundo, Minister of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism have confounded some non-governmental organisations who, by the end of the year, will have no sensationalist issues with which to misinform and poison national and international opinion, a cause which they have championed.

This is why, Mr Minister, cutting the ground from under these miracle-making non-governmental organisations, the Forest Authority, the country's free and independent civil society, the private sector and friends of the Democratic Republic of the Congo congratulate you on the important progress that you have made in the short time that you have been at the head of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism. We therefore encourage you to move forward, with tenacity

and perseverance, with the reforms initiated by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the ultimate aim of ensuring the social progress and economic development of the Congolese people.

I would therefore respectfully urge you, Mr Minister, to pay no heed to the cawing of the crows of ill omen and the shrilling of the cicadas dazed by the African sun. On the contrary, we implore you to continue along the same lines, like the industrious, far-sighted ant, with a vision focused on the wellbeing of our people achieved through the sustainable management of their environment, particularly their forests, their biodiversity and their vast water resources.

Mr Minister,

I would like to congratulate, on your behalf, our friends who have come from afar, on their fruitful participation in the work that will contribute to developing a fresh approach to the implementation of forest governance in our country.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the participants who have come from the hinterland to represent the voice of local and indigenous peoples, who are still waiting for the virtual returns on the environmental services that their forests provide to all humanity.

I would like to thank the Facilitator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, who has made an outstanding contribution through his

personal involvement in the organisation and success of this workshop.

To finish, I wish those of you who have come from the hinterland, from other parts of Africa and from Europe, Asia and the Americas a safe journey home.

Thank you for your kind attention.