

RRI coalition makes its contribution to the Cameroonian forest law reform process

The Rights and Resources Initiative coalition presented its recommendations to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) recently.

As a part of ongoing efforts by the Ministry of Forest and Wildlife, MINFOF, to revise the country's forest governance laws, the Rights and Resources Initiative, RRI Coalition on March 16, 2012 in Yaounde handed over its recommendations on the theme, "Rights, Tenure and Community Forests" to the Inspector Number One in the ministry, Samuel Ebia Ndongo.

The report that is the result of field work carried out in the East, Littoral, South and South West Regions recommends among others that a clear distinction be made between access and customary rights of local and indigenous people to natural resources in reserved areas and government's efforts to alleviate poverty; and stresses the need to reconcile them.

It also suggests that the powers of administrative authorities to stop the exercise of customary access rights be removed, a new presidential decree for compensating local people issued and access into logging concessions for legal hunting and gathering purposes be permitted.

Similarly, RRI is of the view that difficult degazetting conditions of reserved areas be removed, the definition of community forest be revisited to include planted forests, alternatives to compensation of local people in the event of the appropriation of their land for reserved purposes be sought, other than monetary payments. Management plans of reserved areas should be adequately disseminated to local people and enough sensitization be carried out to brief community people on planned reserved areas.

The 16-point recommendations that were handed over to Ebia Ndongo by RRI Coalition member Cécile Ndjebet, will be studied by a consultant and later discussed in work groups before a bill on revising the 1994 Forestry Law is sent to Parliament. RRI is an international coalition of organizations that works for the promotion of the rights of local and indigenous people to their natural resources.

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