



THE *PAPUA NEW GUINEA* ECO-FORESTRY FORUM

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Media Release

"Overwhelming evidence of illegal logging"

"The acting National Forest Services Managing Director's claim in the media that the forest review team of 2003 – 2004 as only that of World Bank is misleading," says the PNG Eco-Forestry Forum.

Forum's Chair, Mr. Kenn Mondiai said that there were also other similar reviews and independent reports done earlier and they all revealed serious allegations of unsustainable and illegal practices within the logging industry in the country. Among them were the Barnett Inquiry of 1998, the Ombudsman Commissions assessment of 2002 and the latest one from the World Bank.

Mr. Mondiai said that there were also various reports from the government's own departments of Labour, Community Development and as well as other independent scientific reports including legal judgments that also revealed similar anomalousness within the logging industry and yet nothing was done about it. Given all those reports with similar findings, it would be sensible for Mr. Wara to prove to the people of Papua New Guinea with facts to substantiate on what grounds he thinks there are no deficiencies and malpractices within the industry," says Mr. Mondiai.

He said even the various independent review teams, sponsored by the World Bank with the endorsement of the PNG Government comprised professional consultants which included lawyers, foresters, economists and environmental and social scientists. "Not only did the government sanction the reviews; it also drew up the terms of reference. The various reviews had government officers as part of the process from the beginning to the end, says Mr. Mondiai. He said therefore, Mr. Wara should not mislead the public to think that it was only the World Bank's assessment that painted a negative picture of the industry.

Mr. Mondiai said what is required now is for the government to seriously revisit the reports and act on their recommendations. There is essentially no need for another independent review as indicated by Mr. Wara because it will be a waste of time and public money as that would still provide the same outcome.

According to the Forum all these reviews were done following concerns over unsustainable logging practices and other illegal activities associated with the logging industry in the country. "It is therefore, about time the National Forest Authority admits the abnormalities that exist within the logging industry to allow for immediate corrective measures and prudent management to revamp the whole industry," said Mr. Mondiai.

PNG Eco-Forestry Forum

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The *Papua New Guinea Eco-Forestry Forum* supports integrated rural community development and sustainable resource use through a viable and sustainable eco-forestry industry