



THE *PAPUA NEW GUINEA* ECO-FORESTRY FORUM

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Media Release

PM's logging operation illegal

The Prime Minister's logging project in the Lower Sepik is under fire from the PNG Eco-Forestry Forum. "We have investigated the operation and found it is illegal on a number of grounds" says Damien Ase, Chair of the Forum.

The alleged illegalities include that the logging has not been approved under the Forestry Act; the National Forest Plan does not allow logging in the Lower Sepik beyond 2001; the forest is not being sustainably logged and there has never been a proper forest inventory. There is also no evidence landowners have given their informed consent.

According to the Forum the Prime Minister's own people are being cheated of their valuable forest resources in return for short-term cash payments.

"Perhaps now people will understand why the Prime Minister and his government have continued to deny the problem of illegal and unsustainable logging despite overwhelming evidence from numerous sources" says Ase.

Just last week the PNG government was once again criticised by the international community for failing to ensure laws are followed in an industry dominated by foreign companies.

The International Tropical Timber Council was invited by the PNG government to send a mission to PNG. The mission report says the forestry sector is plagued with problems including a failure to demonstrate acceptable forest management standards, no sustainability, price fixing and transfer pricing.¹

The PNG Eco-Forestry Forum is urging the Prime Minister to end the exploitation of forest resources by foreign companies and to encourage community groups to get directly involvement in managing their own forests.

"Community groups in PNG are demonstrating their commitment to legal and sustainable forest management by having their sawmill operations independently certified under the Forest Stewardship Council", says the Forum.

"We challenge the Prime Minister to submit his own logging operation to the same level of independent scrutiny and let's see if it matches up".

PNG Eco-Forestry Forum

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¹ http://www.itto.or.jp/live/Live_Server/3227/E-C42-7.doc
