

Friday 01st May, 2015

The Minister for Environment & Climate Change
P.O Box 6601
BOROKO
National Capital District

Dear Honourable Minister,

Re: Eco-Forestry Forums' Reaction to Climate Change (Management) Bill

The membership of the PNG Eco-Forestry Forum would like to thank your Ministry and the Office of Climate Change and Development (OCCD) for giving us the opportunity to comment on this very important document. We hope that this is part of an ongoing, nation-wide transparent, public consultative process that is anticipated to produce an all-inclusive Bill.

The Eco-Forestry Forum and its members have played an active role in the discussions on climate change and REDD+ issues both nationally and internationally. At the policy level, we are represented at the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and the Policy Executive Board of the PNG UN-REDD Programme. We have represented the Asia-Pacific on the global UN-REDD Policy Board three years ago. We have also attended and contributed to all the workshops and meetings organized by OCCD and at the same time carried out awareness and capacity building programs with local communities throughout PNG. At the community level, we have, through our members promoted sustainable land-use planning, including trialling Payment for Environmental Services as a management option, with full community involvement, also participate in forest carbon inventory work. We are pleased to see that more and more results of the work of the Forum and its members are informing and shaping policies on climate change in PNG, as featured by CIFOR (Asia-Pacific's Premier Forestry and Climate Change Research Institution), as the top two REDD Policy influencers in PNG only after OCCD.

Addressing the issue of climate change is paramount as we already witness the impact of climate change on an increasing scale and the costs associated with it far reaching. Since Climate Change is a crosscutting issue that affects most sectors, it is vital for a wide consultative process and input into this Bill to enable a comprehensive legislative and enforcement framework. It is our firm belief that, the announcement that the Policy will be submitted to your office before the June sitting of parliament for endorsement and passage is premature as more work needs to be done. At the time of this letter, we are still collating our comments, though some of our members may have provided comments already directly as well.

[The Bill and REDD+ Policy drafts were circulated to us only two weeks ago, therefore we need more time to comprehensively comment to ensure the Bill is close to perfection].

Honourable Minister, this Bill is an important step towards grounding the institutional setup of OCCD as coordinating agency in preparing the country and its citizens to take adaptation and mitigation actions more seriously. This Bill must therefore aim to show leadership and engender confidence providing linkages with other concerned sectors, therefore needs thorough consultations to accomplish the desired mission of making PNG a climate resilient and progressive country.

Honourable Minister, from the outset we express our disappointment at the manner in which this important Bill is being rushed through. The Bill sets the framework from which Climate Change Action will be coordinated in PNG, hence ample time must be given to key stakeholders such as ourselves, including rural resource owners who will be most affected by the issue.

Honourable Minister, through this letter, we are making two recommendations:

1. That you as the Minister responsible extend the consultation period to allow for all stakeholders, including all relevant government departments to thoroughly provide their comments.
2. That this Bill be workshopped throughout the 4 Regions to substantively gauge views of Forest Resource owners to amicably accommodate their views.

With this, we would like to thank you for understanding of our concerns and taking the necessary actions as per our recommendations for the good of our work on Climate Change in PNG, and we would like to reassure you that we are keen to continue to work together with the Government on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Cosmas Makamet
Chairman of PNG EFF Board of Directors

cc Executive Director, OCCD
 Secretary, DJAG
 Secretary, CLRC
 MD, PNGFA
 Secretary, CEPA/DEC
 Secreatry, DLPP