

# President Sirleaf Begins Taking Action on PUP Abuse

**Monrovia, Liberia** – Upon initial review of the report submitted by the Special Independent Investigating Body commissioned to review the policies and procedures regarding the issuance of Private Use Permits (PUPs), President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has begun acting on its findings and recommendations.

Speaking after a consultative meeting with the Ministries of Justice, Lands and Mines, Finance and the Land Commission, President Sirleaf asserted:

“Let it be clear that I remain committed to protecting our people and ensuring that our natural resources are used to benefit the country and communities in which those resources are found. It is very clear, from this report, that while the introduction of PUPs was meant exclusively for private landowners, the process was abused by investors, government employees and community leaders. This cannot and will not be allowed to stand. Punitive and corrective actions will be taken to ensure that this situation is not repeated.”

In an effort to comprehensively address the legal, social, economic and administrative implications revealed by the report, the President has, in addition, according to an Executive Mansion release, directed that the following measures be taken:

1. The moratorium in effect on PUPs will continue, and any person or business in violation thereof will be prosecuted and penalized in accordance with the law.
2. A Special Prosecution Team will be established at the Ministry of Justice for the exclusive purpose of prosecuting all violations of the law in relation to PUPs by government officials, PUP holders, community leaders, logging companies and others.
3. The activities of ALL logging companies that are also engaged in PUP activities are hereby suspended until the moratorium is lifted.
4. Appropriate administrative actions, including dismissals, will be taken against all government employees across every agency and ministry with connection to the forestry sector that are named in the report to have taken some inappropriate or unauthorized action in relation to the granting of PUPs.
5. With immediate effect, the Board of Directors of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) is dissolved and will be reconstituted.
6. A full audit of the FDA will be conducted.
7. A full review of the legal and regulatory framework governing the management of community forest and private user permits will be undertaken so as to ensure that the intended reforms of the forestry sector, as embodied in the National Forestry Reform Law and the Community Rights Law, can be assured.
8. A National Inventory Team will begin an inventory of logs across the country. Logs

harvested in contravention of the moratorium or under PUPs will be subject to appropriate legal action to include confiscation and public auctions. Proceeds will be used to settle tax obligations to government and to benefit communities affected by PUP abuse.

9. The Land Commission will proceed to conduct a thorough validation of all deeds for PUPs that were granted, to establish their authenticity and provide advice as to associated property and use rights for all categories of these deeds.

10. A massive public education program will be put in place to create awareness of the actions being taken by the government, the reasons why, and the need for the full support by the communities for government's efforts to conserve our forests and permit only legitimate use consistent with the law.