
[Liberian NGO's expectations for an EU/Liberia FLEGT partnership agreement](#)

Liberian NGOs hope that negotiations expected to start this spring between the European Union (EU) and Liberia for an EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) partnership agreement will support their calls for legal reform and respect local peoples' rights to land. At the root of any EU/Liberia partnership agreement must be a definition of legality that ensures good governance and provides long-term control to Liberian communities as the natural custodians of Liberia's forests. It is also important that Liberia's legal and institutional framework is in line with Liberian constitutional principles and socio-cultural realities as well as international law and best practice. The report, "Forest Governance in Liberia, an NGO perspective" published by FERN, details clear recommendations for such an agreement.

If the voluntary partnership agreement turns out to be inadequate and fails to bring with it the necessary legal and institutional reform, it will lead to another negative chapter in Liberia's history. This is a country in great need of visible progress to galvanise faith in the new government of President Sirleaf and the democratic process. The temptation to cash in its national heritage in an attempt to encourage economic growth to fill the public purse and improve infrastructure will be strong, but lessons of the past and of other countries show that selling of old-growth forests fails to even produce the short-term hoped for outcomes. Instead, Liberia must begin to institute the necessary measures to ensure long-term development. In its recovery from fourteen years of civil conflict and decades of bad governance, corruption and overly liberalised trade without meaningful development, another step backwards is something that Liberia can ill-afford.

The report will be available shortly on www.fern.org and www.loggingoff.info. For more information: saskia@fern.org and director@sdiliberia.org