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## Papua New Guinea: NGOs call for reform of forest industry

A coalition of non-government organisations is calling on the Government to make some fundamental changes in the forest industry. They are calling for the continuation of the current moratorium on new logging concessions until reforms are in place to deal with the many problems in the sector.

Speaking as Chairperson of the Eco-Forestry Forum, Mr Sasa Zibe Kokino said, “the Prime Minister has already admitted that the forest industry is in a mess with poor practice, corruption and unsustainable logging operations. We are now calling on the Government to ensure that the necessary reforms are made before the current moratorium is lifted.”

The NGO recommendations are included in their ‘Submission on the Forest Industry Moratorium and Reviews’ a document that was presented to the Prime Minister on 27 November 2000. The Submission contains an assessment of the reasons behind the current appalling state of the forest industry and sets out the changes that are needed.

The NGOs are asking for the Government to honour their promise of a review of current forest operations and for the completion of the current review of proposed new concessions. They also want to see the recommendations from these reviews fully implemented together with systems to prevent the same problems being repeated in the future.

The NGOs are also calling for a new and effective method of enforcing the logging code of practice which, they say, is currently being ignored. They also want to see a new National Forest Plan that properly considers all land use options and reflects the wishes of resource owners. The NGOs are also calling for an independent system to ensure that forest management is truly sustainable and a change in the focus of the Forest Authority from one of assisting loggers to access resources to one of monitoring and controlling forest operations.

The NGO Submission is the result of collaboration between eighteen different national and international organizations and their local partners. It has been developed over a number of months and has included patrols to many remote areas of the country to gather the views of resource owners and to assess current practice in the forest industry.

As Mr Kokino explained, “We see the current moratorium as a last chance for our forests. The moratorium must be maintained and fundamental reforms implemented before it is lifted”.

Source: Press release of the Papua New Guinea Eco-Forestry Forum,