



## 4rd Report of the LTA Secretariat For the period • September 11 - October 20, 2015



Since the last sitting of this body on September 11, 2015, the Secretariat has undertaken and/or implemented the following activities:

### A. ADMINISTRATION

1. **Staffing:** During the period under reviewed, the staff of the Secretariat continued to enjoy a cordial working relationship with each other. The revision of the self-appraisal of each staff has been completed. Kindly find attached at the end of this report a summary of same. Meanwhile the Secretariat continues to enjoy a cordial working relationship with members of the Executive Committee as well as most of the member companies.
2. **Electricity & Internet:** We have continued to benefit from almost a regular and steady supply of these utilities since we managed to secure them. We have developed and submitted to those that have some form of agreement with the LTA to occupy some portion of its office space a plan for the cost-sharing of these utilities, as well as janitorial services and others. We have so far only received contribution from Mr. Francis Carbah in this regard, but we are hopeful that the others will begin payment of their portion very soon.
3. **Membership Directory:** The completed final draft of the membership directory of the LTA is still awaiting your final revision in order to make it official. This final draft revision was submitted to everyone by email almost two (2) months ago. Some of our partners are urgently requesting copy of said directory but we have been hesitant to give it since it is yet to get your final endorsement and approval. We are hopeful that same will be done today.
4. **Registration of members:** During the period under reviewed, no additional member registered with the Secretariat. There is still a large number of those listed in the directory that hasn't as yet register with the Secretariat. Registration Completed Certificates have been printed and we will commence delivery of certificates to those who have registered by the 26<sup>th</sup> of October. According to our records, eighteen (18) companies have completed their registration. Below are companies who have completed their registration for the year 2015:

S/N	COMPANY NAME	AMOUNT PAID (U\$)
1.	Atlantic Resources Ltd.	1,000.00
2.	Alpha Logging & Wood Processing Company	1,000.00
3.	Akewa Group of Companies	250.00
4.	International Consultant Capital	1,000.00
5.	Geblo Logging	1,000.00
6.	Redwood Enterprise	250.00
7.	E J & J Invest. Corp	500.00
8.	Liberia Hardwood Corporation	250.00
9.	LTTC Incorporated	500.00
10.	Forest Venture Incorporated	1,000.00
11.	D.C. Wilson	250.00
12.	Mandra Forestry Liberia Ltd.	1,000.00
13.	TUTEX Wood Management Corporation	250.00
14.	Association of Logging Eng.	200.00
15.	Euro Liberia Logging	1,000.00

16.	Global Timber Company	250.00
17.	LCM	250.00
18.	BODECO	250.00
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10,200.00</b>

5. **The LTA's Act:** The search for the Act is still continuing but has not as yet yielded any fruitful result. Sometime last month we were requested to verify if the Act was actually passed in 1976 or in some other year. This request was prompted by the fact that those we had contracted to locate same were stating that they had currently reviewed all of the various Acts passed in 1976, but have yet to see the Act establishing the LTA. We then requested that they expand their search to include 1975 and 1977 which they have agreed to do, but that too hasn't yield any result as yet. There is a dire need to locate this document as it is needed in order to execute several decisions and actions. Meanwhile, the Secretariat, about a month ago, drafted and circulated a Memorandum of Understanding for revision and comments which we hope will be endorsed before the end of this meeting and a date set for its signing. The MOU was again circulated along with other documents needed for this meeting and hard copies are in your respective folders. We also seek your approval and endorsement for us to begin contact with a lawyer in order to engage in a contract for the writing and submission of a new Act to the Legislatures for enactment and a LTA's Code of Conduct. This request is based on our belief that even if this Act is located it will be out-dated and won't ably address the current day realities.
6. **LTA Policy Manual & Code of conduct:** Work on the Personnel Manual has been a bit delay for several reasons beyond our control but it is still ongoing and hoped to be completed on or before the December's Monthly Meeting of this group. Work on the Code of Conduct for LTA member companies has not yet begun.
7. **Submission of Concept Notes:** The Secretariat was informed by a visiting guest from the Global Timber Forum (GTF), Mr. Gustav Adu, that there was a Call for Concept Note from the FAO-FLEGT program on the GTF's website which was worth at most a 100,000 Euro each. We submitted two sets of concept notes and are currently awaiting feedback from the FAO's office. Please be informed that while we did submitted two concept notes we are only qualified to be awarded one. These concept notes were developed with the assistance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Mr. Deah.
8. **Action Points of Last Meeting:** In keeping with decisions taken during the last meeting the Secretariat wrote letters to the President of the Republic of Liberia, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President Pro-Tempore, as well as the Chairman of Forestry of both Houses requesting audience for the LTA's officials. We are glad to report at this time that the Honourable Speaker has agreed to meet with officials of the LTA on tomorrow, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, at 3pm, in his office. The Secretariat, along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President and Mr. Mannah, ably represented the LTA at the funeral rites of the sister of the Treasurer. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President read a tribute on behalf of the LTA and wreaths were deposited on behalf of the Secretariat and the LTA.
9. **Networking:**
- SGS Office:** Sometime in early September, the Secretariat secured the commitment of the SGS to allow the Secretariat to be place on the mailing list of recipients for its monthly reports. We have since been informed that we can now access these reports, but all attempts by us to do so have failed. We have therefore reached out to them for information on how to access same and hope to be able to do so soon. We also managed to get the SGS to agree to allow the Secretariat to be sitting in its regular monthly technical meeting. We were informed that the

LTA is already being represented by three (3) of its members at said meeting but we aren't sure of exactly who are the three and on what basis are they being on this committee – officially representing the LTA or in their own capacity as a logging company.

**European Timber Trade Federation:** On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September the Head of Secretariat reached out to Mr. Andre de Boer, Secretary General of the European Timber Trade Federation, thru an email requesting for the establishment of possible closer collaboration and cooperation between the two offices. Mr de Boer responded back on the 19<sup>th</sup> proposing that we elaborate a bit more on how we see this collaboration and cooperation. We now seek your endorsement and approval for us to proceed with this. We have also reached out to Mr. Christian Sloth of the Timber Legality Programme Management for the same cooperation and collaboration.

**Concession Information Management System (CIMS) and Concession Reporting Templates (CRT) Launch:** The President, Mr. Merab, along with the Head of Secretariat and Mr. Emmanuel Erskine, Jr. of Atlantic Resource Ltd. on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September represented the LTA at this launching based on an invitation extended to the LTA by the National Bureau of Concessions (NBC).

**West and Central Africa Exchange Meeting:** During the period under reviewed, the LTA was represented by its 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President and its Head of Secretariat to the West and Central Africa Exchange Meeting which was held in Douala, Cameroon on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of September. A detail report from said meeting is in your folder. Other documents from said meeting can be gotten from the Secretariat by email.

**National Bureau of Concession's Meeting & Workshop:** The Communication & Training Manager, Mr. Kerkula, attended and participated in a meeting & workshop at the offices of the National Bureau of Concession on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October regarding the finalization of a template for a form that the NBC anticipate having various concessioners fill out. Concessioners represented at the workshop was unhappy with the many types/kinds of reporting templates that they have to generate for different line ministries and agencies of government and wanted assurance from the NBC that if they, the concessioners, file a report with the NBC, the NBC will share the report with other governmental bodies that they, the concessioners, had reporting obligations with. The NBC responded that it will work with their counterparts in government to ensure a one-stop reporting center at the NBC, in line with the NBC mandate to be a repository of all concession information.

**National Union of Community Forest Dependent Committee's Election:** Three staff of the Secretariat travelled to Gbarnga on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October to represent the LTA and served as observers to the elections of the NUCFDC's representatives to the National Multi-stakeholders Monitoring Committee (NMSMC). The results of the elections are as follow:

	<b>REGIONS</b>	<b>REPRESENTATIVES</b>	<b>ALTERNATE</b>
1	Western	Michael Roberts	K. Roberts Nyango
2	Central	Solo Peters	Matthew Wallly
3	South-eastern	Edward Q. Teah	Moses Saypo

Major decision reached during said meeting are as follow:

- That henceforth, a regular meeting time for the union will be established
- That within the next two years a functioning Secretariat will be set up for the union
- That the union work with media to disseminate information to its members

- That an agreement be reached with the various logging companies operating in their respective community to sustainably manage the forest
- That the union work with all other concerned stakeholders to ensure that all old forest law be amended.
- That training programs be establish by the union for the various CFDC representatives
- That the union conduct a Training of Trainers Workshop for its leaders and other concerned members

**Rethinking Liberia Forest's Meeting:** Based on an invitation from the organizers, the President, Mr. Merab, headed a large entourage of LTA's members and staff of the Secretariat to this two day meeting which was held at the Paynesville City Hall on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of October. The LTA's delegation included the President, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, the Treasurer, Mr. Erskine, Mr. Mannah, Mr. Ben Koffie, Mrs. Odebenme, the Head of Secretariat, and the Communication & Training Manager, among others. The President delivered a thought provoking paper at this meeting on behalf of the LTA. The Secretariat is in the process of ensuring that the paper delivered by the President is published in at least two major papers within the course of next week.

**LEITI Secretariat:** On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October the Head of Secretariat received a call from Mr. Sarnyenneh M. Dickson, of the LEITI, informing him that the LEITI has finally gotten the go ahead to work with the LTA on a proposal submitted by the LTA to the LEITI for the hosting of a two day workshop/retreat to increase the forest sector knowledge of their role in the LEITI process and to fresh LTA member companies of existing laws and regulations regarding the forest sector. A quick meeting was arranged, on the same day, in the LTA's Conference Room between the LEITI and the LTA. Those representing the LTA at that meeting were the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, the Treasurer, the Head of Secretariat, and the Communication & Training Manager. During said meeting it was agreed that the LTA will do an update of said proposal and resubmit same to the LEITI at the soonest possible time and then a contract will be signed between the LTA and the LEITI for the implementation of same. The updated version has been submitted and we are now awaiting the LEITI's respond. Meanwhile kindly be informed that the total cost of the project is US\$4,000.00 and it is expected to be implemented within a month time.

**LTA's Communication Strategy:** During the period under review, the Secretariat under the direct supervision of its Communication & Training Manager developed a draft Communication Strategy for the LTA. Said draft strategy was sent to each of you along with other documents pertaining to this meeting. It is also our hope that said draft strategy will be adopted here today along with whatever amendments needed.

**LTA's Training & Documentary Proposal:** Resubmission is again being made of said document for your review, no objection, and support. This document was first submitted during the last monthly meeting in September but wasn't discussed due to time factor. It is our hope that if implemented, this will give a public face to the LTA and finally set the record straight that the LTA is indeed functioning and active.

**WRT College of Agriculture & Forestry/University of Liberia:** During the period under review, the Secretariat developed a relationship with the Department of General Forestry of the above mentioned College. Based on discussions between the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the LTA, Mr. Deah, and the Chairman of the Department, Mr. John T. Woods, the latter submitted a project proposal to the Secretariat, for onward submission to this body, for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of the Forest Product Research Lab at the University of Liberia. Said proposal can be found in your file for revision and consideration.

**The Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC):** On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October we received a letter over the signature of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President informing us that the LTA has been requested by the FMAC to review the Letter of Intent signed between the Government of Liberia and Government of the Kingdom of Norway and make recommendations to the FMAC on the way forward and implementation process for consideration. We have also managed to get from the Communication & Training Manager a copy of a previous stand taken by this body with regards to this Letter. We are now requesting if this is still the position of the LTA and therefore should be forwarded as is or if this body intent modifying this position prior to sending it to the FMAC. A copy of said position was sent along with other documents for this meeting and a hard copy is in your folder.

**The Liberia Chamber of Commerce (LCC):** During the period under review we began negotiations with the LCC for the re-admittance of the LTA back into the membership of the LCC. Based on the instruction of the President, we have submitted a Membership Application Form to the LCC and is now awaiting its reaction to it.

10. **Budget Support:** During the period under reviewed, the Secretariat continued to receive the regular monthly support from the VPA-SU in the amount of Three thousand nine hundred fifty United States Dollars (US\$3,950) for the month of September. Monthly contributions from member companies are still not forthcoming. As of this moment, only BODECO, Alpha Logging and Atlantic Resources have paid their respective monthly contributions for the month of July. BODECO is the only company who have paid for August and September. The Secretariat is appealing to every member to please pay, as these funds are badly needed to maintain the office and do other things.

11. **Support from the VPA:** As can be seen from the below financial report, the major source of income for the running of the Secretariat during this reporting period was from the VPA-SU as monthly dues from member companies and other expected sources of income weren't forthcoming during the period under review.

**B. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR the Periods September 11- October 21, 2015**

Analysis of the receipt book and deposit slips reveal the following:

**Income**

➤ Receipts (10/19/2015)BODECO Monthly Due Payment (August & September)	US\$ 400.00
➤ Receipts (9/28/2015) VPA Monthly Support (September)	US\$ 3,950.00
➤ Reimbursement from ITTO's trip( Mr. John S. Deah)	US\$ 1,604.27
➤ Six Months Payment of Share Cost (Mr. Francis Carbah)	US\$ 400.00

**Total** **US\$ 6,354.27**

**Expenditure**

➤ Salaries & Transportation Allowances (September 2015)	US\$ 3,305.00
➤ Operational Cost (October 2015)	US\$ 1,016.00
➤ Mr. Johns S. Deah's air ticket to Cameroon (September 22, 2015)	US\$ 1,624.00
➤ DSA, Visa fees, & Accommodation cost for Mr. Deah and Mr. Witherspoon to travel to Cameroon for the Exchange Meeting (September 21, 2015)	US\$ 1,120.00
➤ Local travel to Gbarnga, Bong County (October 2, 2015)	US\$ 210.00
➤ Publication for LTA in July edition (September 14, 2015)	<u>US\$ 75.00</u>

**Total**

**US\$ 7,350.00**

**Shortage**

**US\$ 995.73**

1. **Financial Narrative:** A total of US\$ 7,350.00 was disbursed during the period September 1– October 9, 2015. Of this amount, USD 3,305.00 was used for Salaries and transportation allowances. USD 1,016.00 was used for Stationery and Electricity as well as other office's needs. US\$1,624 was used for Mr. Deah's and Mr. Witherspoon's trip to attend the GTF meeting in Cameroon. VPA-SU requested that the LTA be present at the NUCDFC workshop held in Gbarnga, Bong County, the Secretariat in collaboration with the President and some members of the Board agreed to transport three members of the Secretariat to this meeting; the amount of US\$210.00 was used for transportation and feeding for one day and US\$ 75.00 was used to publicize the LTA in the Business weekly day newspaper on July 24, 2015.
2. **Outstanding Obligations:** The payments of withholding taxes to the Liberia Revenue Authority on behalf of employees as well as the payments to the National Social Security & Welfare Corporation of the 3% deduction from staff salaries and the 4.75% payment requirement of every employer are still the major outstanding obligations of the LTA. At the moment the LTA is indebted to the LRA for withholding taxes in the amount of US\$2,105.22. The LTA is also indebted to the NSSWC in the amount of US\$396.00 representing the 3% deduction made from staff salaries plus the amount of US\$627.00 representing the required 4.75% from employers. These three figures make a grand total outstanding obligation of US\$3,128.22. The Secretariat has been trying to get this done but haven't achieved any result as the LTA doesn't have a Tax Identification Number (TIN) and can't get one without producing some legal document justifying its existence. We have been in discussion with the guys at the Liberia Business Registry (LBR) concerning the way forward and they have proposed that we submit an Article of Incorporation to the LBR for registration as a NGO as we are a Non-for-Profit organization. We urgently seek your advice on the way forward.
3. **Personnel Expenses:** According to our records the total cost of maintaining the staff in the Secretariat monthly is US\$4,106.75, inclusive of the 4.75% required employer's payment to NSSWC. The VPA-SU is supplementing this monthly with the amount of US\$3,500.00. This leaves the amount of US\$606.75 that needs to be raised every month to augment the monthly payroll of the Secretariat.

#### **C. HINDERANCES AND SETBACK**

During the period under review, the Secretariat continued to be plagued with the issue of lack of needed office equipment and logistics to carry out the various tasks that were assigned to it. Most often than not, cartridges have to be refilled instead of being purchased due to the limited funds allocated for monthly stationaries. The Secretariat is without an official vehicle to move around to carry out the various tasks assigned to it. The amount of time spent waiting for a taxi is a serious steal away from productive office hours. Due to serious financial setback cause by its members inability to pay their monthly dues the LTA hasn't yet been able to do some of the key things it had original earmarked to do under its work plan and budget.

#### **D. FUTURE OUTLOOK AND IMPLEMENTATION**

During the incoming period, the Secretariat hopes to continue working with the Executive Committee in striving to implement the goals and objectives of the LTA. Based on a mandate of the President, we will be developing a policy of Local and Foreign Travels for your review and endorsement. It is also

envisaged that we will finalize with SGS our access to its monthly report on the internet, execute the LEITI's sponsored workshop/retreat, as well as the documentary activities. It is also hope that we will continue networking with those that are listed in this report and that we will be able to begin work on the new Act, the Code of Conduct for Members, among others.

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

E. Ekema A. Witherspoon, I.  
**Head of Secretariat**  
**Liberia Timber Association**