



NO REDD IN CROSS RIVER COALITION

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5th November, 2018

Dr. Alice O. Ekwu
Honourable Commissioner
Ministry of Climate Change and Forestry
Diamond Hill Calabar
Cross River State
Nigeria

Dear Honourable Commissioner,

CONSULTATIONS WITH INDIGENOUSE COMMUNITIES OF CROSS RIVER STATE OF NIGERIA ON THE MATTER PERTAINING TO THE COLONIZATION OF THEIR ANCESTRAL FORESTLANDS AND HERITAGES CONTRARY TO THE LAW.

1) Preamble:

- 1) We have come in contact with your letter of 26th October, 2018, addressed to the Board Members, California Air Resources Board, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 9581, USA. We have observed with delight the following declarations that have been made by the Hon. Commissioner, Ministry of Climate Change and Forestry in the said letter:

“California’s partnerships with indigenous peoples, like the Yurok Tribe, show us how a state government can work together to conserve forests, promote economic development, and respect indigenous peoples’ history lands, livelihoods, knowledge and culture.”

- (Extract from paragraph 2 of the letter under reference.)

“The work of the California Air Resources Board has also shown us the importance and power of consultation with partner jurisdictions, local communities, civil society, and regulatory experts when developing standards.”

- (Extract from paragraph 4 of the letter under reference.)

2.0) THE CONTENTIONS OF “NO REDD IN CROSS RIVER COALITION”

Our Coalition has very legitimate reasons to challenge the declarations made by the Honourable Commissioner as cited here above:

2.1) CONSULTATIONS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’

In the citation extracted from paragraph 2, you referred to *“California’s partnerships with indigenous peoples, like the Yurok Tribe...”* Our contention in this respect is that the Honourable Commissioner went ahead to make declarations on behalf of the government of Cross River State of Nigeria to the Board on matters pertaining to which the Commissioner do not have any evidence of consultations with the indigenous peoples and communities vide:

- i) Mbe Mountain,
- ii) Ekuri Initiative and
- iii) Mangrove Forest Zone cluster communities.

Our question therefore is: Is the Honourable Commissioner implying that the indigenous forest communities of Cross River State of Nigeria are inferior to the **“Yurok Tribe”** that the Commissioner have cited as a standard in the declaration under reference? Our question is based on the reality that none of the affected communities in the Cross river State forest zones has been brought

into any dialogue with the Cross River State government; which process could have resulted in the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of the community forestland owners. In essence, it is our contention that the Honourable Commissioner went ahead to make declarations on behalf of the forest communities of Cross River State without their consent and/or authorization.

2.2. THE IMPORTANCE AND POWER OF CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY, ETC.

In the citation extracted from paragraph 4 of the Honourable Commissioner's letter, the declaration has been made as follows:

“The work of the California Air Resources Board has also shown us the importance and power of consultation with partner jurisdictions, local communities, civil society, and regulatory experts when developing standards.”

We wish to draw the Commissioner's attention to that fact that no such consultations with the partner jurisdiction, local communities, civil society, has ever taken place between the government of Cross River State and the groups cited above. It is therefore amazing that a declaration such as this could be made in the name of government to an International Agency when the situation on the ground points to the contrary. We posit that the indigenous communities that own these resources have not been granted the courtesy of being involved in consultations over their ancestral lands and heritages which are about to be colonized by external interest.

We are by these medium notifying the California Air Resources Board of USA that they are unwittingly being railroaded into the scenario of grabbing forestlands and resources belonging to indigenous peoples and communities in contravention of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as other extant laws, international treaties and conventions as well as municipal laws. We therefore implore the government of Cross River State of Nigeria, the California Air Resources Board of USA, the United Nations, the World Bank, International Civil Aviation Organization and all other interested parties to be appropriately guided. Please find attached the joint declaration of the affected communities for your information and appropriate action.

Please accept our best regards to you now and always,

For & on behalf of “NO REDD IN CROSS RIVER STATE COALITION”:

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Executive Director

Green Concern for Development (GREENCODE)

Umo Isua-Ikoh,

Executive Director,

Peace Point Initiative (PPA)

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Research/Project Officer (Energy & Climate Change)

Social Development Integrated Centre (Social Action)

Odey Oyama

Executive Director

Rainforest resource and Development Centre (RRDC)

CC:

- i) California Air Resources Board
- ii) The Governor of Cross River State
- iii) The Speaker Cross River State House of Assembly
- iv) The Chairman, Cross River State Forestry Commission
- v) The Chief High Commissioner, Ombudsman, Public Complaints Commission.