

PARLIAMENT OF GHANA LIBRARY

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GHANA

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LANDS AND
FORESTRY

ON

ILLEGAL FELLING AND HARVESTING OF
ROSEWOOD AND ITS ATTENDANT
DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE
BUILSA SOUTH DISTRICT

DECEMBER, 2018

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON LANDS AND FORESTRY ON THE
ILLEGAL FELLING AND HARVESTING OF ROSEWOOD AND ITS
ATTENDANT DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE BUILSA
SOUTH DISTRICT**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Pursuant to Article 103 (3) of the 1992 Constitution and Order 177 of the Standing Orders of the House, the Rt. Hon. Speaker directed the Committee on Lands and Forestry to conduct an enquiry into the illegal felling and harvesting of rosewood and its attendant destruction of the environment in the Builsa South District and to make recommendations to the House.
- 1.2 The directive followed a statement made by Hon. Clement A. Apaak, MP for Builsa South, drawing the attention of the House to the illegal felling of Rosewood in the savanna zone, especially in Builsa South, and its effect on the environment.

2.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

In considering the referral, the Committee made reference to the following documents:

- i. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana
- ii. The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana
- iii. Timber Resources Management Legality Licensing Regulations, 2017
- iv. Statement made by Hon. Clement Apaak

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to provide detailed and concise information on the illegal felling of Rosewoods in the Builsa South District, the Committee adopted the following methodology:

- i. Fact-finding visit to Fumbisi and its environs in the Builsa South District in the Upper East Region of the country to ascertain the facts. During the visit, the Committee interacted with key stakeholders including the Regional Coordinating Council, Regional Office of the Forestry Commission, District Chief Executive and technical staff of the Assembly, District Forestry Officer and some Traditional Rulers in the area.
- ii. The Committee subsequently met with the Hon. Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and other Officials to ascertain measures being put in place to curb such illegal practice.
- iii. Review of relevant legislations and regulations
- iv. The Committee held meetings to analyse the information gathered, drew observations and made some recommendations and conclusions

4.0 OBSERVATIONS

4.1 State of Rosewood logging at Fumbisi

The Committee, during its visit to Builsa South District in the Upper East Region and interaction with traditional rulers in the area, noted that the illegal logging of the Rosewoods in the area has been a long standing issue. Various Governments, Traditional leaders and the Assembly have put in efforts to tackle the illegal felling of Rosewood in the District and in the northern part of Ghana as a whole.

The Committee was, however, informed that the concentration of illegal logging in the area in the past two years, which previously occurred only in the off Reserves is beginning to occur in the Reserves as well. This is because population of Rosewoods in the off Reserves has dwindled and no longer economically viable.

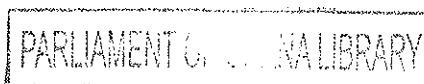
4.2 Knowledge of the Consequences of the Felling of trees

The Committee also noted that the traditional leaders of the area as well as the District Chief Executive are aware of the environmental consequences of the illegal activity on their livelihood as farmers.

4.3 Flouting of Timber Regulations

The Committee noted that *Timber Resources Management and Legality Licensing Regulations, 2017 (L.I 2254)* clearly states that “Every person who owns a Chainsaw shall apply to the District Assembly of the area where the person resides for the registration by the District Assembly of the chainsaw”. Regulation 29 (1) also states that “A chainsaw registered with the District Assembly shall be registered with the District Forest Office of the district concerned where it is intended to be used”.

The Committee observed that the above Regulations have continuously been violated, but the culprits are hardly convicted and sanctioned in accordance with Regulation (41) of the *Timber Resources Management and Legality Licensing Regulations, 2017 (L.I 2254)*



4.4 Alternative source of livelihood

Interactions with some of the Chiefs of the Community revealed that the lack of alternative sources of livelihood within the forest communities is a major cause of the illegality. The Committee noted that these communities cited within the forest areas are dependent on the forest for their day-to-day needs including shelter, food and firewood for cooking and are, therefore, unable to resist the enticement of colluding with illegal loggers for monetary gains because of the economic hardship they find themselves.

It was also realized that, even though a series of bans on the logging and salvaging of Rosewoods have been issued in the past and still being enforced, people still felled them and subsequently applied for salvage permits to take the felled woods out of the forest and District.

The Committee was also informed that some permits were issued in the year 2017 to allow the already lying logs to be salvaged to prevent members of the community from using it as charcoal.

4.5 Harvesting of rosewoods in other Regions

The Committee gathered during its interaction with the Ministry that harvesting of rosewood has currently shifted from the northern part of Ghana to northern Ashanti and northern Volta, where more Rosewoods are found. Salvaging Rosewoods in these areas is still ongoing.

4.6 Volumes of felled Rosewoods

The Committee was informed by the Ministry that a Committee was set up to determine the volumes of the already felled trees in the Northern part of Ghana. According to the Committee's report dated 7th July, 2017, data collected on Rosewoods that were felled between July, 2017 and September, 2018 was as follows:

Region	VOL. Permitted (M ³)	VOL. Evacuated (M ³)	Balance (M ³)
Northern	140,731.87	88,708.40	53,072.34
Upper East	5619.030	3790	1829
Upper West	60472.403	36567.500	23904.903

Source: rosewood Permit Report, 2018

On the basis of the volumes determined, salvage permits were issued to the contractors and that is being monitored by the Ministry. Since then, no new permits have been issued for salvaging.

4.7 The mystery of abandoned logs

The Committee expressed concerns about the mysterious abandoned logs that keep replenishing, and the question of how the logs get on the ground in the first instance that warrants salvage permits to be issued to log operators occasionally was raised.

4.8 Piloting rosewood plantations

The Ministry again informed the Committee that having recognized the economic importance of Rosewoods, in response to export demands, it has started a pilot project to establish Rosewood plantations across the country, particularly in Ashanti, Northern and Brong Ahafo Regions. A number of forest districts were selected for trials in these regions.

4.9 Understaff

Officials of the Forestry Commission attributed their inability to properly regulate the logging of Rosewood to limited staff. They cited instances where a forest size of 20 kilometers is manned by only one (1) forest guard.

4.10 Lack of Resources

The Committee was again informed that one of the critical challenges of the Forestry Commission in monitoring activities within the Reserves and off-Reserves was lack of vehicles, security logistics and the requisite training to monitor and ward off any reported intrusion.

4.11 Insecurity

The Committee also noted with concern, the security threats officials of the Forestry Commission face in the course of doing their work. They informed the Committee that Forest Guards have become vulnerable to repetitive assaults and attacks by illegal chainsaw

operators across the country. This is more prevalent in instances where the activity takes place off reserve.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Committee, after its deliberation, recommends the following:

- i.** the perpetrators of illegal logging of Rosewood should be convicted and sanctioned in accordance with Regulation (41) of the ***Timber Resources Management and Legality Licensing Regulations, 2017 (L.I 2254)***
- ii.** adequate resources (vehicles and security logistics) should be provided to the Forestry Commission to enable them effectively protect Ghana's forest cover;
- iii.** disallow salvage permits;
- iv.** immediate measures must be put in place to address the life threatening dangers associated with the work of Forest Guards by amending the current legislation to allow Forest Guards to possess arms in the performance of their duty;
- v.** efforts should be made to provide alternative livelihood and life skills to reduce overdependence on forest resources;
- vi.** at all times communities in the forest area should be actively consulted when making policies concerning forest management;
- vii.** the Member of Parliament for the Builsa South District should also collaborate with the District Chief Executive and the Assembly to increase awareness on the dangers of deforestation and the harvesting of rosewoods;
- viii.** the Ministry should sustain the effort at establishing Rosewood plantations; and

- ix. the Ministry should consider establishing plantations of fast growing economic trees.

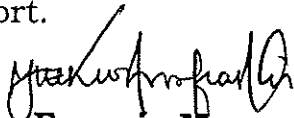
6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Forest reserves have an enormous potential to contribute to the development of a country, and their role to the human race cannot be overemphasized. As an old African proverb puts it, “when the last tree dies, the last man dies”; this shows how important our forefathers saw trees and, therefore, linked it to the very core of our human existence. However, these benefits are threatened by illegal logging of trees in this instance, the Rosewood.

The Upper East Region is the least endowed in the area of forest cover. Continuous exploitation of Rosewood in the area will pose serious environmental consequences of eroding the Region of its natural resources. The quality of soil will be degraded and eventually affect the production of agricultural produce. Many animals that depend on the forest for livelihood are also disadvantaged. Climate change will become inevitable, resulting in adverse weather patterns which might be characterized by extreme heat or too much rainfall.

The Committee is of the view that a concerted effort by all stakeholders including Civil Society, the indigenous people of Builsa South District and law enforcement agencies is needed to win the fight against the devastating activity of deforestation.

The Committee therefore recommends to the House to adopt its report.



Hon. Francis Manu-Adabor

Chairman, Committee on Lands and Forestry



Linda Gyekye Boadu

Clerk, Committee on Lands and Forestry

4th October, 2018

