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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT RATIFIES TIMBER UTILISATION CONTRACTS PAVING WAY FOR THE ISSUANCE OF FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND TRADE (FLEGT) LICENCES

At the nineteenth (19th) Sitting of the Third Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Eighth Parliament of the Fourth Republic, held on Thursday, July 11, 2024, Parliament ratified eleven (11) Timber Utilisation Contracts (TUCs) granted for the exploitation of timber resources, in accordance with article 268(1) of the Constitution, and section 9 of the Timber Resources Management Act, 1997 (Act 547). The eleven (11) TUCs form part of the first batch of nineteen (19) TUCs submitted to Parliament for ratification, in accordance with the Constitution. The ratification of these TUCs paves way for Ghana to issue Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Licences for the export of timber and timber products to the European Market. This will make Ghana the first country in Africa, and the second in the world, after Indonesia, to issue FLEGT License for timber and timber products.

It would be recalled that Cabinet, at its twenty sixth (26th) meeting held on Thursday, March 31, 2022, granted approval for the conversion of one hundred and fifty-six (156) timber concessions and permits into TUCs, in accordance with section 19 of Act 547, and for same to be laid before Parliament for ratification.

Act 547, which came into force on 18th March, 1998, prohibits the harvesting of timber without a TUC. Prior to this Act, timber rights were granted in the nature of timber concessions, leases and permits under the Concessions Act, 1962 (Act 124). The introduction of TUCs is a major policy reform in the forestry sector to provide for a competitive system of allocating timber resources.

Under Section 19 of Act 547, all existing timber rights prior to Act 547 were to be valid for only six (6) months, and holders of those timber rights were to apply for TUCs within six (6) months of the coming into force of the Act. However, for almost twenty-five (25) years after the coming into force of the Act, these concessions and leases had not been converted into TUCs.

By the conversion of these concessions and leases into TUCs, and the subsequent ratification by Parliament, Ghana has made significant progress in the legal trade of timber to meet the European Union's requirement. This Parliamentary ratification, also, brings to an end the processes for the grant of timber rights, and affirms Government's commitment to ensure the legal and sustainable management of Ghana's forest resources.

The ratification of these TUCs puts Ghana on track in discharging her obligations under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU on the issuance of FLEGT Licenses, and will support the fight against deforestation and forest degradation, while enhancing environmental and natural resources governance to contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources wishes to thank Parliament for ratifying these TUCs. We are confident that Parliament will expedite action on the processes for the ratification of the other TUCs before it. The Ministry is, also, grateful to all partners who facilitated the process for the ratification of these TUCs. The Ministry reiterates its commitment to the efficient and sustainable management and utilisation of the natural resources of our country in general, and our forest resources, in particular, in the spirit of transparency, candour, integrity and utmost good faith, for the benefit of the Ghanaian people, the true owners of these resources.

END

ISSUED BY:

**THE PUBLIC RELATIONS UNIT
MINISTRY OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES**