

Dear colleagues from the diplomatic missions in Geneva, my name is Brother Lent Fugui, a Franciscans from Solomon Islands. I present this statement on behalf of Franciscans International, the Society of Saint Francis of Solomon Islands, Dominicans for Justice and Peace and the Dominican Network in Solomon Islands. I would like to highlight key concerns related to the impact of logging activities on human rights.

On the participation and consent of local communities on their customary lands: Major issues remain concerning the respect for meaningful participation and consent of local communities affected by logging plans and operations. Even when environmental and human rights issues are raised during Timber Rights Hearings, the issues are not taken into consideration by the Provincial Government.

On the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment: We observed that in Laovavasa, in Guadalcanal Island, logging activities have left behind great devastation. Loggers harvesting the largest trees also end up destroying other small trees. The consequences of the destruction of forest and land are considered very severe by the community, as soils are now eroding being exposed to sun and rain; water sources dry up; rainfall is not dispersed efficiently and flash floods happen, as well as droughts and landslides.

On the right to An Adequate Standard of Living, including food, water and sanitation: The diversion of the economy towards logging has impacted farming and traditional ways of life. As an archipelago country, fishery is a key source of livelihood for the population. However, the fish resources have declined because of sedimentation of rivers and reefs. This is a result of runoff from upstream cutting areas, and log-pond and wharf construction. In February-March 2020, major floods in the Guadalcanal Province impacted Selwyn College of the Church of Melanesia, located in a coastal area surrounded by forest. The flood affected access to safe drinking water, sanitary facilities, food gardens of the school, as well as the rural health centre next to the school. As the septic tanks were flooded, there were serious concerns regarding the health impacts. Floods are believed to be exacerbated by logging activities in the upstream area around the school compound.

On women's rights: There have been several allegations of sexual violence related to the presence of logging companies and their foreign workers. A report on the gendered effects of corporate logging in Malaita Islands found that women in the region experienced sexual exploitation. Women are disproportionately affected by logging and mining activities, in particular where women have a limited role in negotiations on land. Women have often been neglected in decision-making process.

On environmental human rights defenders: In 2018, five environmental activists, known as *Nende Five*, were imprisoned for opposing the logging activities in the primary forest on Nende in Santo-Cruz Island in Temotu Province. While three of the activists were acquitted, one activist, is facing life imprisonment for arson and another was convicted of larceny and unlawful damage; their lawyer stated that their confessions were given under duress.

On the impact of logging activities on climate change: Despite its commitment to mitigate climate change, the Government of Solomon Islands has not submitted its revised Nationally Determined Contribution. The forest in Solomon Islands has been contributing to the world's carbon sink. However, if the deforestation continues, the impact of logging activities will be

very significant for the environment, not only for Solomon Islands but also the global efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Recommendations to the Government of Solomon Islands

1. Protect human rights against abuses and environmental degradation by logging companies and ensure effective remedies when abuses have occurred.
2. Take appropriate legislative and administrative measures to ensure that the use and exploitation of natural resources do not adversely affect the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.
3. Ensure that, through all stages of the logging process, the rights to participation and information of affected communities are fully respected, in accordance with international standards.
4. Undertake awareness-raising programs on the environmental, social and human rights impacts of logging and on the rights and protections people shall enjoy, including programs targeting women and youths.
5. Take appropriate legislative and administrative measures to ensure that the use of exploitation of natural resources do not infringe the rights of local communities to dispose freely of their lands, territory, and natural resources, in accordance with international standards.
6. Guarantee the effective protection of people at risk because they defend their rights or the rights of communities, the land or the environment in the context of logging projects and ensure that all violations committed against them are thoroughly and impartially investigated and that victims are provided with effective remedies.
7. Exploitation and domestic violence, with a focus on communities affected by logging activities. Ensure access to sufficient safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for the entire population, including those who are affected by, or even active in, logging activities.
8. Adopt coherent and comprehensive mitigation and adaptation climate policy and actions based on human rights norms and principles.