



**Pierre Méthot, Senior Fellow, World Resources Institute (WRI)**

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**Procedures for converting old forest titles into forestry concession contracts – The current state of play**

Given that the end of hostilities foretold a revival of the sector, forestry speculation started in 2001 leading to 250 forestry contracts covering 39.4 million hectares at the beginning of 2002. With the introduction of the new Forest Code, an initial clean-up effort led to the cancellation of 163 titles covering 25 million hectares. At the same time, a moratorium on all new allocations was brought into effect. However, this moratorium was not complied with and a significant number of new titles were allocated nonetheless. As a result, a decree (n° 05/116) establishing the procedure for converting former forest titles into forestry concession contracts and extending the moratorium on the granting of titles for forest exploitation was signed on 24 October 2005.

A Technical Working Group (TWG), composed of representatives of the Service Permanent d'Inventaire et d'Aménagement Forestier (SPIAF, Permanent Forest Inventory and Planning Service) and the Direction de la Gestion Forestière (DGF, Forestry Management Directorate) and the Direction Générale des Recettes Administratives, Judiciaires, Domaniales et de Participation (DGRAD, Directorate-General of Administrative, Judicial, Domain and Shareholding Receipts), was set up to evaluate the 156 conversion requests received. The TWG completed its checking work in November 2006 and is to hand in its report for mid-February 2007.

The TWG's report is to be submitted to an inter-ministerial committee (IMC) charged with examining and approving or rejecting the opinions of the TWG on each title evaluated. The IMC has not yet been set to work and its membership will probably have to be changed to take account of the new constitution and government. The IMC will have 45 days to make a decision on the opinions of the TWG and submit its report to the government.

The procedure is placed under the supervision of the Ministère de l'Environnement, Conservation de la Nature, Eaux et Forêts (MECNEF, Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Water and Forests) and has technical support; it is subject to strict monitoring by an independent observer (WRI-Agreco) thanks to funding from the World Bank in the general framework of the Emergency Economic and Social Reunification Support Project.