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Ref. No. 14/2/112

21st March 2004

PAO

FROM : The Director of Forestry, P.O Box 30048, Lilongwe 3

TO : All District Forestry Officers

CC : All District Commissioners

: All Assistant Directors of Forestry (Headquarters), P.O. Box 30048, Lilongwe 3

: The Deputy Director of Forestry (Plantations, P.O. Chikangawa, Mzimba

: The Deputy Director of Forestry (Research), P.O. Box 270, Zomba

: The Regional Forestry Officer (C), P.O. Box 65, Lilongwe

: The Regional Forestry Officer (S), P.O. Box 5493, Limbe

: The Regional Forestry Officer (N), P.O. Box 223, Mzuzu

: The Principal, Malawi College of Forestry and Wildlife

: The Secretary for Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, Private Bag 350, Lilongwe 3

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DEVOLVING FORESTRY RESPONSIBILITIES TO DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES

Please refer to a circular letter and directive pertaining to the approval by Cabinet of a Devolution Plan relating to the Natural Resources Sector. You may also, in addition, wish to refer to the National Forestry Programme Document, pages 17 to 20 under theme "Role Building to Improve Forestry and Livelihoods"

You are requested to proceed implementing all the activities and functions listed in the attachment to this letter but under the mandate of District Assemblies.

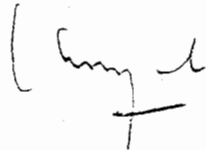
Your immediate action is required in regard:

- Discussing the listed functions with the District Commissioners.
- Drafting up Work Plans and Budgets for submission to District Commissioners/Assemblies for their approval and implementation.
- Commencing immediately reporting to District Commissioners on all matters relating to the listed functions and activities.

Your attention is drawn to the decision that all forest reserves and Central Government timber and fuelwood/pole plantations, gazetted and proposed forest reserves, forestry research plots, as well as the Malawi College of Forestry and Wildlife will continue to be managed by Central Government through the Department of Forestry.

In terms of funding, Department of Forestry will continue to disburse any ORT funds that are made available and budgeted under the current financial year, 2003/2004. In similar manner, I request you to continue to deposit all forest revenue into account number 1 for the rest of this financial year unless advised otherwise.

Further detailed instructions will be issued later on staff secondment to District Assemblies, vehicles, buildings, etc.



K.M. Nyasulu
DIRECTOR OF FORESTRY

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES TO BE DEVOLVED TO DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES

1. "Legal Capacity"

- District Assemblies to draw up District Forestry Bye-Laws for approval by the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs.
- Develop and strengthen Forest Law Enforcement Teams/Units in the District Forest Office.
- Develop and implement a forest licensing system for the district.
- Enforce existing Forest Management Agreements with local communities, individuals, etc where these have been established.

2. Forest Management and Conservation

- Rehabilitate existing Local Authority Plantations.
- Create new Local Authority Plantations.
- Create new Local Authority Forest Reserves (on bare hills, water catchments, river banks, etc).
- Facilitate and support the formation and management of village forest areas.
- Preparation of forest management agreements with local communities, individuals, etc.
- Preparation of forest management plans for customary land forests.

3. Extension

- Provide forestry extension advice to communities, individuals, institutions, estates etc.
- Facilitate the formation of VNRMC's and CBO's.
- Provide training in forest management to farmers, CBOs, Schools, etc.
- Co-ordination of various stakeholders in forest and other natural resources management.
- Mobilising donor support for community level forestry projects.

4. Research and Training

- Facilitate technology and information transfer from FRIM, ICRAF, Universities, and other research organisations.
- Identify research needs and conduct research in collaboration with FRIM.
- Conduct Training Needs Assessments and implement district training plans in conjunction with Malawi College of Forestry and Wildlife, other relevant training institutions, Non Governmental Institutions and relevant private sector agencies.

5. Forest Protection

- Develop wild forest fire prevention strategies for all forests on customary lands.
- Prepare forest fire management plans for local authority plantations and forests.
- Draw up forest education and awareness programmes on forest fires.
- Develop district forest pest and diseases monitoring scheme with support from the Forestry Research Institute of Malawi.

6. Forest Biodiversity Conservation.

- Develop appropriate plans to conserve forest biodiversity.
- Conserve all areas of cultural and scientific value.
- Conserve and protect all riverine vegetation.

7. Urban Forestry

- Advise urban authorities on preparation of long-term urban forest management plans.
- Support the Reforestation of urban streets and other open spaces.
- Facilitate the development of urban recreation parks, in liaison with City/Town Park managers.
- Advise the urban authorities on sound forest utilisation practices.

8. Forest Information Management and Reporting

- Develop and implement a forest resource assessment and monitoring system.
- Submit forest resource information in the DSOER.

- Draw up and submit quarterly and other reports to Secretary for Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs.

9. Gazetted Forest Reserves and protected hill slopes

- Gazetted forest reserves will be managed, protected and controlled by Central Government through the Department of Forestry.
- The Central Government will undertake to deploy the required numbers of technical and other staff in order to ensure that these areas are sustainably managed and utilised for the benefit of the adjacent and other people.
- Progress and issues being made in the course of managing gazetted forest reserves will be reported to Central Government as well as the respective District Assemblies for their information and, where applicable, their support and assistance.
- The Central Government will endeavour to introduce and apply the most appropriate technologies and approaches in the management of gazetted forest reserves in order to guarantee sustainable water and biodiversity conservation. District assemblies will be encouraged to adopt and apply such technologies and approaches in the management of their designated forest reserves.
- The pressures and threats directed at forest reserves at present justify the involvement of District Assemblies in terms of advocacy for the maintenance of forest reserves in their districts. Assembly members will, therefore, undertake to maintain high levels of interest and support for the maintenance of the forest reserves in their districts especially in relation to encroachments, illegal tree felling, poaching and similar demeanours.

10 Forest Staff

- The Central Government, through the Department of Forestry will second to the District Assemblies all staff that are related to the implementation of activities covered by guidelines 1 – 8. The Department of Forestry will, however, retain all District Forestry staff that are involved in the implementation of forestry activities relating to forest reserves and forestry research plots and associated activities in each district. Such staff will be reporting to the Regional Forestry Officer while also copying their reports to the District Assemblies through the present District Forestry Officers.
- Details regarding specific officers to be seconded to the Assemblies and those to be retained by the Department of Forestry will be released by end April, 2004.

11 Buildings

- Office buildings will be used for District Forestry work by both forestry extension and forest reserve management staff. District Assemblies will, however, assume responsibilities for the ownership of buildings that stand on land owned by District Assemblies.
- Exceptions to the above will include office buildings positioned in gazetted forest reserves and land registered specifically under the Department of Forestry. The Department of Forestry will continue to use such offices to intensify and expand forest management programmes relating to forest reserve management for sustained water catchment management in the districts.
- Other buildings that are serving the interests of industrial forest plantations (as offices, stores, workshops, staff housing, sheds, etc) will continue to be managed as institutional structures and subject to any new policy directives, e.g. forest plantation privatisation initiative.
- A comprehensive and detailed list reflecting all buildings to be transferred to District Assemblies will be circulated by end April 2004.

12 Vehicles

- District Forestry Office vehicles, (i.e. Motor vehicles, Motorcycles, bicycles, tractors, etc) will continue to be used by District Forest personnel for district forestry work programmes.
- Officers that will be transferred to District Assemblies will continue to use the vehicles and equipment assigned to them.
- A detailed and comprehensive list showing vehicles to be transferred with the staff will be drawn up and distributed by April, 2004.

13. Links between the District Assembly Forestry staff and Forestry Department staff (at Regional Forestry Offices, Forestry Department Headquarters, Malawi College of Forestry and Forestry Research Institute of Malawi)

- The links between the seconded District Assembly forestry staff and those at Regional Forestry staff, Forestry Department will continue in terms of (i) professional and technical information and back up (ii) existing projects that are aimed at capacity building of district staff (iii) Forestry Department coordinated projects that are in the pipeline/ under negotiation with selected donors. Efforts shall be made in all such cases to ensure that the resources and efforts in such projects are expanded consistent with the decentralisation policy objectives.
- Regional Forestry Officers will continue to support District Assemblies on technical and professional matters. The landing point for such support shall be District Commissioners who will be kept in the picture