

PM Marape and PNG's Reputation rest with the Forest Authority

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Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister has told the world that his nation will end its export of tropical round logs by the close of 2025, but implementation of that promise rests with the PNG Forest Authority which critics say does not have a good track record for controlling the logging industry.

"Prime Minister James Marape has made a huge promise to the international community gathered at the COP30 meeting in Brazil", says ACT NOW Campaign Manager Eddie Tanago. "He has pledged that our nation will stop exporting unprocessed round logs at the end of this year. This means that the PNG Forest Authority must not issue any new Log Export Permits from the 1st of January." "The Prime Minister's reputation and the reputation of our Nation is now on the line, as the whole world will be watching to see if the promise is upheld."

ACT NOW! says while it congratulates the PM for his declaration, it has grave doubts about the ability of the PNG Forest Authority to ensure the promise is kept. "The PNG Forest Authority has an appalling record when it comes to following the law and implementing government policy," says Eddie Tanago. In 1991, the new Forestry Act which created the PNGFA, replaced the concept of the Timber Rights Purchase and Local Forest Area with a new type of logging licence, the Forest Management Agreement. Yet over thirty years later, less than 15% of log exports come from FMA areas and the TRP and LFA still dominate the sector. The government's Vision 2050 banned log exports from 2010, a ban that was endorsed by the then Prime Minister, Peter O'Neill in 2008. Yet in 2010 log export volumes reached record highs and in 2015 PNG became the world's largest exporter of tropical logs. In 2018, the O'Neill government promised log exports would end by 2020; a pledge that was repeated by the new Marape government in 2019. But the deadline passed and PNG has remained the world's largest exporter. In 2020, Prime Minister Marape made a new pledge that there would be no new export licences issued but within two years, twenty new export logging projects had started operations. Then, in November 2022, the National Forest Board imposed a moratorium on the issuing of new Forest Clearing Authorities. Yet in 2023 and 2024 there were five new FCA projects that started log exports. Eddie Tanago says he hope his pessimism is proved wrong and that the PNG Forest Authority can step up and break the cycle of history by ensuring there are no exports of round logs from January 2026.

"Hopefully now is the time the Forest Authority can show a different face and ensure the Prime Minister's promise to the world is fulfilled", says Tanago.