



## Greenpeace Environmental Organisation NPC

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February 2016

Jonathan Johnson-Watts  
Chief Operating Officer  
SG Sustainable Oils Cameroon  
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Limbe, Cameroon  
[jjw@voltared.com](mailto:jjw@voltared.com)

CC: Dr. Blessed Okole, Director SGSOC  
Roderick Orr, Wyse Environmental Ltd  
Hamish Stevenson-Hamilton, WyseGroup  
Anthony Mills, WyseGroup  
Phillip Ngolle Ngwesse, Minister of Forestry, Cameroon  
Henri Eyebe Ayissi, Minister of Agriculture, Cameroon  
Kombe Henry Pasang, Divisional Officer, Nguti Sub Division  
Ntoudgong Chamberlin, Senior Divisional Officer, Indian Division  
Quetong Handerson Konge, Senior Divisional Officer, Kupe Mwanenguba Division  
Achere Arrey, Divisional Officer, Toko Sub Division  
Fombele Mathias, Sub Divisional Officer, Mundemba Sub Division

Dear Mr. Johnson-Watts,

For more than 3 years Greenpeace and other organizations have publicly campaigned against the development of the SGSOC palm oil plantation in the Southwest Region of Cameroon. We understand you have been involved in leading the SGSOC project since last summer. As the new Chief Operating Officer of this project, we are writing to you to make sure you are aware of the local and international opposition to this project related to environmental destruction and a history of conflict with local communities surrounding this project, as well as strongly urge you to immediately suspend all operations.

International NGOs such as Save Wildlife, FERN, Environmental Investigation Agency and Greenpeace are committed to continue campaigning against SGSOC in support of local opposition to the project's potentially disastrous social and environmental impacts, its intimidation of local activists and its refusal to comply with Cameroonian and international law.

Greenpeace campaigns to halt deforestation and promote responsible development worldwide. As part of our global work, we are active throughout the Congo Basin and Cameroon in particular. We are monitoring the expansion of industrial palm oil projects and working to improve forest governance. In recent years, we have focused great attention on the destruction stemming from the SGSOC project in the Southwest of Cameroon for the following reasons:

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- The project is planned in an area of **High Carbon Stock and High Conservation Value forest** and will destroy the habitat of at least 23 large mammal species including endangered wildlife, like the chimpanzee.<sup>1</sup>
- SGSOC and the Government of Cameroon failed to obtain **Free Prior and Informed Consent** of local communities and the consent being claimed by the company is not being secured from communities in line with accepted international standards for Free, Prior and Informed Consent.<sup>2</sup> and is reported to have resorted to "intimidation and corruption" to acquire land.<sup>3</sup>
- SGSOC was cited for illegal logging by the European Union- funded Independent Forest Observer,<sup>4</sup> continued to clear forest during a suspension by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife,<sup>5</sup> and was found to be colluding with the Cameroonian government to illegally obtain a permit to export illegally felled timber from the project concession area.<sup>6</sup>
- The company's contract violates Cameroonian and international human rights law.<sup>7</sup>

The SGSOC project is a toxic one that will not be allowed to proceed unimpeded. The history of the SGSOC project is riddled with opposition, illegalities and trouble. Throughout the last three years, a coalition as large as 50 organizations has repeatedly garnered international media attention in our fight against this project. Reports have shown the deceit of the project including how it will not bring socioeconomic development, does not have the support of all local communities and will not help the people of Cameroon.<sup>8</sup> And we have shown how the SGSOC project has lied about its impacts.<sup>9</sup> In response, SGSOC investors were targeted, leading some to abandon the project,<sup>10</sup> international bodies got involved,<sup>11</sup> legal cases were brought against the project, and international media attention reached millions in establishing the project as notoriously the wrong project in the wrong place.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/document/download/0dd3e0ecc8c8d2d7928e7da842ec56ffen.pdf/SGSOCreport\\_final.pdf](http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/document/download/0dd3e0ecc8c8d2d7928e7da842ec56ffen.pdf/SGSOCreport_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/publication/2013/07/fpp-fpic-herakles-final-july-18-web.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> This is according to a report by Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and a German-funded program called the Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (PSMNR).

[http://cameroonveritas.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/03\\_01\\_2013\\_report-fact-finding-mission-sgsoc.pdf](http://cameroonveritas.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/03_01_2013_report-fact-finding-mission-sgsoc.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Independent\\_Observer\\_Report--SGSOC\\_Official.pdf](http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Independent_Observer_Report--SGSOC_Official.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/news/Blogs/makingwaves/evidence-of-illegal-logging-by-herakles-farms/blog/46584/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/Global/africa/publications/LicenceToLaunderFinal.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See both [http://cedcameroun.org/images/2013\\_RapportsCED/201310\\_en.pdf](http://cedcameroun.org/images/2013_RapportsCED/201310_en.pdf) and

<http://www.relufa.org/documents/Herakles13THLabour.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Land\\_deal\\_brief\\_herakles.pdf](http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Land_deal_brief_herakles.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/briefings/forests/2013/Herakles\\_ExposedFinal.pdf](http://www.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/briefings/forests/2013/Herakles_ExposedFinal.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [www.herakles-farms.com](http://www.herakles-farms.com)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Letter\\_UN\\_Rapporteurs.pdf](http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/Letter_UN_Rapporteurs.pdf)

I am sure you were already aware of the wide spread trouble SGSOC has faced in the past that this short synopsis only briefly covered. As the new leadership to this project, we strongly urge you to reconsider the future of the SGSOC project and instead consider beginning a palm oil project the right way, by working with local communities and international organizations to chart a truly sustainable, respectful and legal path forward.

To be clear, Greenpeace is not against palm oil. We stand for palm oil to be produced in a responsible way--without leading to deforestation, threatening endangered wildlife, and without fuelling land use conflicts or undermining people's rights and livelihoods.

For example, Greenpeace helped establish the Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG), a collaboration between agro-industry and NGOs to demonstrate that responsible palm oil development is possible. POIG provides strong guidance for responsible palm oil by building on the RSPO's certification scheme with additional requirements to ensure that there is a supply of traceable palm oil, free from forest destruction and human rights abuses, and compliant with land and food rights and transparency and anti-corruption measures.<sup>12</sup> All large scale palm oil plantations in Cameroon, should follow the POIG guidelines.

Additionally, you may already be aware of Greenpeace's demands that palm oil companies and investors adopt 'No Deforestation Policies' and that companies outline and respect timely implementation actions. Many companies have already made such commitments, moving towards eliminating forest destruction and social injustice from their supply chains. These companies are at various stages of implementing these commitments, but among them are industry giants such as Cargill, Musim Mas<sup>13</sup> and Wilmar International.<sup>14</sup> If these companies can commit to not destroying any forests in their operations and respecting the rights of locals, there is no reason that you and SGSOC cannot do the same.

Greenpeace and a number of other international organizations are rapidly finalizing several plans for this campaign; therefore we request that you answer the following questions by no later than 21 March 2016.

1. Will SGSOC engage in any processes to remedy past environmental exploitation, illegalities or social injustice, including land grabbing and uncompensated workers?
2. Will SGSOC communicate in any way with local communities impacted by your project, before proceeding with new operations? If so, when will this happen and who will lead this process?

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<sup>12</sup> The Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG) Charter: <http://poig.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/POIG-Charter-v1.pdf> and more information can be found at <http://poig.org/>

<sup>13</sup> Musim Mas is a POIG member and is committed to zero deforestation. <http://www.musimmas.com/news/sustainability-journal/2015/musim-mas-affirms-its-commitment-to-sustainable-palm-oil>

<sup>14</sup> Wilmar's Zero Deforestation, Zero Peat, Zero Exploitation Policy; <http://www.wilmar-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/No-Deforestation-No-Peat-No-Exploitation-Policy.pdf>



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3. Are SGSOC's investors aware of the existing and future clearance of High Conservation Value forests and High Carbon Stock forests present in your concession?
4. Will SGSOC continue the legacy of intimidation of local activists<sup>15</sup> or will you respect peaceful locals' right to free speech?
5. Does SGSOC intend to restart operation in Mundemba? If so, how did you intend to repair the injustice to the local communities and former workers?

We look forward to your response. We are always available to speak with you if you have any questions or would like to engage in a dialogue to find a solution to the situation. Please do not hesitate to email or call.

Sincerely,

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.grain.org/article/entries/4879-cameroon-activists-on-trial-for-peaceful-protest-against-wall-street-land-grabber>



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