



## Greenpeace Environmental Organization NPC

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Socapalm  
Jean Pierre Charbon  
General Manager  
BP 691 Douala  
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Also sent via email to: [sonck@gmail.com](mailto:sonck@gmail.com) and [wbaert@socapalm.org](mailto:wbaert@socapalm.org)

13 May 2014

Dear Mr. Jean Pierre Charbon,

We are writing to you in relation to Socapalm's palm oil activities in Cameroon.

Greenpeace campaigns to halt deforestation and promote responsible development worldwide. As part of our global work, we are monitoring the expansion of industrial palm oil projects throughout the Congo Basin and in Cameroon.

In recent years, we have focused great attention on the destruction stemming from the Herakles Farms project in the Southwest of Cameroon for the following reasons:

- The project is planned in an area of High Conservation Value (HCV) and will destroy the habitat of endangered wildlife<sup>1</sup>;
- Herakles has failed to follow best practices in obtaining free prior and informed consent of local communities<sup>2</sup> and is reported to have resorted to "intimidation and corruption" to acquire land<sup>3</sup>;
- Herakles has been cited for illegal logging by the European Union- funded Independent Forest Observer<sup>4</sup> and continued to clear forest during a suspension by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife<sup>5</sup>;
- The company's contract violates Cameroonian and international human rights law.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://m.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/briefings/forests/2013/Waltert-Report-Herakles-June-2013.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> 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>

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The Herakles Farms project is a toxic one that should in no way be replicated by other investors in the region.

Through our monitoring in the region Socapalm's current expansion of your palm oil plantations has been brought to our attention.

The palm oil industry is at a critical juncture. While investors and palm oil industry players are eying Africa for expanding large-scale plantations, palm oil production is one of the main causes of deforestation, related greenhouse gas emissions and often leads to conflict with local communities with regards to land rights and their access to land and forest resources on which they are highly dependent. We are writing to ensure that Socapalm adopts the necessary safeguard policies to respect the rights of local communities and the environment.

To be clear, Greenpeace is not against palm oil, but 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.

Thus, we are calling on investors and companies to adopt the policies explained below:

- The *Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG)* was created as a collaboration between agro-industry and NGOs to demonstrate that responsible palm oil development is possible (please find a copy of the POIG Charter in the footnotes). 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>7</sup> All large scale palm oil plantations in Cameroon, including Socapalm's should follow the POIG guidelines.
- You may already be informed of Greenpeace's demands that palm oil companies and investors adopt 'No Deforestation Policies' and that companies outline and respect timely implementation actions. Various companies have already made such commitments, moving towards eliminating forest destruction and social havoc from their supply chains. These companies are at various stages of implementing these commitments, but among them are industry giants such as Golden Agri-Resources (GAR)<sup>8</sup> and Wilmar International<sup>9</sup>, as well as several consumer products companies including Kellogg's, L'Oréal, Unilever, Ferrero and Nestlé.

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<sup>7</sup> The Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG) Charter:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/Global/international/photos/forests/2013/Indonesia%20Forests/POIG%20Charter%2013%20November%202013.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> More information about GAR's Forest Conservation Policy and Zero Deforestation announcement:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/media-center/news-releases/GARs-No-Deforestation-policy-to-now-apply-to-all-palm-oil-suppliers/>

<sup>9</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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Given the dynamic environment around palm oil production and the increasing global demand for deforestation-free palm oil, we request that you make public for all stakeholders, including Greenpeace, any and all plans related to Socapalm's current expansion activities as well as all prospects you have for new investment in the Congo Basin (no matter how prospective), including the purchase of existing plantations and/or the rehabilitation of abandoned plantations.

Greenpeace also requests clarification about Socapalm's current operations in Cameroon including the social and environmental safeguard policies that guide your operations, as well as implementation actions to ensure the respect of your policies on the ground. In order to assess the impact of the agricultural activities, we'd kindly like to request you make public Socapalm's concession maps which includes expansion plans and a copy of the available environmental impact assessments, HCV assessments, and other relevant documentation.

Any environmental management plan or other action plan that can provide clarification to the guidelines you follow on the ground in your plantations is requested. Please also publish the records of Socapalm's communications and consultations with local communities both for the original plantations and current expansion, demonstrating how Socapalm has been undertaking the Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) of the population.

We are convinced that you will agree that transparency, including the public availability of documents and information, is the backbone of responsible business, and is critical to inspiring public confidence and avoiding reputational risk. Socapalm's sharing of information about its operations with all relevant stakeholders will help achieve just that.

In the interest of transparency, we will publish this letter online and will continue to publicly communicate with all stakeholders in the Cameroon and the Congo Basin with regards to information you make available.

We look forward to your response, which we would appreciate receiving within one month (no later than 13 June 2014). We are always available if you have any questions or would like any further information. Please do not hesitate to email or call.

Yours sincerely,

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