

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix – Travail – Patrie

MINISTERE DES FORETS ET DE LA FAUNE

CABINET DU MINISTRE

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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

MINISTRY OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE

MINISTER'S OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

Cameroon's Minister of Forestry and Wildlife hereby informs the national and international communities that on 25 April 2024, a coalition of 9 (nine) national and international environmental protection NGOs published a joint open letter entitled: "Cameroon is a country at high risk of deforestation and forest degradation." The letter, currently circulating on social media, was addressed to Cameroon's European sectoral partners.

The letter goes back over the petition of well-known stereotypes that are peculiar to them: deforestation, violation of the rights of indigenous peoples, illegal logging in the area where CAMVERT palm oil plantation project is being set up in the Ocean Division and its ramifications in the Campo Ma'an National Park (human/wildlife conflict), as well as the classification of 2 (two) Forest Management Units (FMUs) in the EBO forest massif, which they consider to be quarrelsome. They also refer to Cameroon's failure to comply with its international climate commitments.

The Government of Cameroon firmly condemns these allegations, which have no other objective than to undermine its efforts to conserve biodiversity. Our country, which attaches great importance to respecting its commitments to the world's major ecological causes and the fight against climate change, expects its partners to keep the promises they have solemnly made at major international gatherings. It is not logical that the right of NGOs to exist can be achieved by reporting and denying obvious facts, to the detriment of Cameroon's image.

The surface area of Protected Areas in Cameroon indeed covers 9,837,310.07 ha, or 20.71% of the national territory. This is well above the United Nations target of 12%. Cameroon's deforestation rate is around 0.6%, making it one of the lowest in the Congo Basin sub-region.

Communities alongside Local and Regional Authorities must be taken into account in the management of Protected Areas and production forests, as stipulated in their creation Decrees. Management plans are therefore drawn up in a

participatory and inclusive manner, and provide for negotiated agreements between stakeholders and locals. By way of illustration, in 2019, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife signed an initial Memorandum of Understanding with the Baka Community under the ASBABUK Association. This collaborative framework has inspired four others, in the southern part of the country whose signings are in progress, due to the convincing results achieved. In the same vein, since 2000, the State has transferred a cumulative amount of more than 130 billion CFA francs of annual forestry royalties and leasing taxes to councils and local communities. The regulations in force also recognise their right of use and provide a framework for the creation of community forests and community-managed hunting areas, from which they derive substantial income.

Alleged high-risk deforestation and forest degradation are just mere imagination. The 2.5 million m³ of legal timber marketed locally and internationally each year represents 30% of the country's annual production capacity. Sectoral support for the development of agro-industries is an endorsed government policy aimed at reducing palm oil deficit, estimated at more than 160,000 tons, and the balance of trade, which is largely to Cameroon's disadvantage in this area. Impact studies that have already been carried out and approved aimed at effectively addressing challenges linked to this activity.

Regarding the fight against illegal logging, the effective launch of the Second Generation Forest Information Management IT System (SIGIF2) is a major achievement. This application was developed against all odds by Cameroonian engineers. Its results inspire confidence among stakeholders in the sector. The gradual digitalisation of procedures has contributed to making great strides towards improving governance in the sector, much to the satisfaction of logging companies, whose massive support was decisive in achieving these results.

So-called environmental NGOs are revealing the agenda of some pressure groups whose Trojan horses are in Cameroon. Their hostility to all human activity in the forest environment is a radical option that not only prevents us from assessing our progress but also leads them to underestimate, or even undermine, Cameroon's interests, Cameroon's interest and the need to improve the living conditions of its population.

Yaounde,

Jules Doret NDONGO
Minister of Forestry and Wildlife

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