

FSC international
Mr Heiko Liedeker
Charles de Gaulle Str. 5
53113 Bonn, Germany

CC: Eurocertifor - BVQI and Hubert Bonafos

Yaounde, Amsterdam, London, Paris, 22th November 2006

Dear Mr. Liedeker,

With this letter we want to express our deep concern about the certification of the (BV-FM/CoC-051201) WIJMA concession 09 021 in Cameroon in December 2005.

1- Summary of the facts

- In May 2005, we were informed by Eurocertifor about their intention to organize a public consultation meeting in Douala in view of certifying the concession 09021. CED conducted a mission in the concession and produced a list of GPS points indicating violations of FSC principles and criteria in the concession. In addition, social conflicts were identified and a desk study of the concession's management plan showed additional violations of FSC principles and criteria. This information was provided to Eurocertifor, both in written form and during the public consultation meeting.
- The concession was certified in December 2005. There was no communication from Eurocertifor about the certificate, despite the requests from NGOs and other interested parties for more than one month. The public summary report has not been published until today, almost 8 months past its required 3 month deadline, resulting in a major CAR for Eurocertifor.
- CED conducted a new mission in the concession in February and March 2006. All the problems raised in the May 2005 report were still present, and in some cases were even worse than before the certification. Three hours of video footage was taken, documenting the violation of several FSC principles and criteria.
- A formal complaint was issued to Eurocertifor, including both shortcomings in the certification decision and the poor quality of their communication. Until now there has been no follow up on the formal complaint by Eurocertifor other than a communication stating the formal complaint is based on miscommunication and does not affect the work of Eurocertifor or Wijma.

- A surveillance audit of the FSC ASI team was conducted in June 2006. The conclusion of Eurocertifor and the FSC team were divergent. Eurocertifor decided to keep the certificate in place, and to issue corrective action requests. Eurocertifor states that the certificate has helped improving the situation in the concession, which is an implicit recognition of the fact that things were worse when the certification decision was taken. The FSC ASI team concluded that in June 2006, the concession was not meeting the requirements for an FSC certificate.
- In May 2006, REM, the Independent Observer of law enforcement in the forestry sector in Cameroon visited the concession and found two violations of the law. Wijma has declared a lower volume on the DF10 and logs were abandoned in the concession without proper marking (this has already been mentioned in the CED information provided to Eurocertifor in May 2005). The REM report was approved by the Ministry of Forests, and was published in July 2006 (www.observation-cameroon.info). REM recommends to put forward appropriate sanctions against the companies and to strengthen control in forest concessions in order to combat these illegal activities.
- In November 2006 CED and FOE Netherlands conducted a follow up mission at the Wijma concession 09 021. We have to conclude that after being certified for nearly a year, Wijma has not yet resolved the conflicts and illegal forest operations at the villages Tom and Tsa'assono a.o. (of which Eurocertifor was informed during certification process). The abandoned and unmarked logs in the vicinity of Tom are still in the forest. According to the "Comite de Suivi", there has been no meaningful solution to this conflict. Wijma explained that the logs were left because the authorized date and volume were already expired¹. Thereby admitting having logged these trees illegally and in the act depriving the local people of their share of the exploited timber volume as this timber is not officially recorded. Until now the people are not compensated.

Wijma also exploited 200 ha of the community forest of Tya' assono and included this area within its concession boundaries. Thereby destroying all the efforts spend on preparing the management plan for this community forest. In September there was a meeting regarding this conflict where Wijma donated 2 million FCFA to resolve the conflict. The money is to be used for the community forest. This is however by no means sufficient compensation for the loss of 200 ha of forests, the exploited volume of timber and the creation of a new management plan. For the village the conflict remains, but for Wijma this is a "reglement definitif." Wijma does not officially recognize their responsibility in this boundary conflict, but calls it a state matter².

Those two cases contradict the statements of Eurocertifor- BVQI that Wijma is on the right track. If needed, we would be happy to provide more detail on those and other violations of FSC principles and criteria.

1 Compte rendu de la reunion du comite de suivi de l'ufa 09 021 (août 2006)

2 Procs verbal relatif aux reglement definitif du probleme des limites de la forest communautaire de tyassono avec les limtes de l'UFA 09 021 (September 2006)

2- Our analysis of the situation

We have FSC-certified timber currently being sold, coming from a concession which does not, according to the FSC, comply with the FSC standards. And which is considered by the Independent Observer of law enforcement in Cameroon as hosting illegal activities performed by the managing company. The Wijma certification is therefore highly controversial and undermines the credibility of FSC certification in Cameroon.

3- Our request

Bearing in mind that the worldwide decreasing support from NGOs for the FSC certification system is fueled by controversial certifications, we urge you to act without delay in order to increase credibility and show true commitment for sustainable forest management. We request:

- The immediate cancellation of the FSC certificate issued to the company Wijma for 09 021.
- Suspension of Eurocertifor's FSC accreditation for their poor performance in the Wijma certification process and failing to close out their major CARs issued by the FSC ASI within the required time line.
- To give priority to the development of a national standard and enforcing this standard to prevent controversial FSC certificates in Cameroon in the near future.
- To provide us with a detailed update on Wijma's efforts to comply with FSC principles and criteria (to explain the Eurocertifor BVQI statement that Wijma is on the right track)

Please note that until this controversial certification has been resolved, and as a result of the bad experience of stakeholder consultation with Eurocertifor, we are not likely to become involved with the same efforts in other ongoing certification processes in Cameroon.

We are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

With Kind Regards,

Samuel Nguiffo	FOE Cameroon / CED
Danielle van Oijen	FOE Netherlands / Milieudefensie
Sylvain Angerand	FOE France
John Nelson	Forest Peoples Programme
Judy Rodrigues	Greenpeace International