



Communiqué : Socfin

Greenpeace has published an article on its website (<http://www.greenpeace.org/france/fr/>) titled, « Threats to African forests», erroneously presented as an investigation into the new frontier of deforestation in Africa.

We are unjustly implicated in the said article and insist on formally denying the various inaccurate or biased allegations concerning our African operations.

Greenpeace presents our operations in a radically incorrect manner, clearly with the objective to discredit our Group's operations and to publicly denigrate our Group and our shareholders as well as our commercial and financial partners.

Greenpeace pretends SOCFIN « poses a serious threat to the African tropical forests » by deforestation and conversion of abandoned spaces into plantations, in this way constituting a considerable climatic threat.

Greenpeace's main argument resides in our Group's so-called non-respect of environmental standards accepted by the majority of multinational companies.

Such allegations are false and libellous.

SOCFIN has since long adhered to a policy of no deforestation and protection of the existing forests and has translated these commitments into a document titled « zero deforestation » dated 30 October 2015 (<http://www.socfin.com/Files/media/News/0DeforestEN2.pdf>).

This formalization of our policy has arisen from Greenpeace's actions, letters and discussions, in particular in the presence of representatives of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), subsidiary of the World Bank, and other NGO's involved.

This step was positively welcomed by Greenpeace, delighted about our commitment, even though the chosen methodology was not the one developed by their organization, but in accordance with the definitions provided by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. This choice was equally approved by IFC, as it was in line with the strict criteria of IFC and OECD directives.

This commitment follows the publication of our « Sustainability Policy » on 31 July 2015, covering the majority of Greenpeace's requests.

By adoption of this policy, the Socfin Group has already committed to:



- Complying with the Principles and Criteria of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and IFC performance standards;
- Not undertaking any development in High Conservation Value areas, and so, in the tropical forests Greenpeace refers to;
- Not undertaking any development in critical habitats (natural or modified);
- Respecting the rights of the local and indigenous communities, including their right to give or refuse their free, prior and informed consent.

It is thus particularly incorrect and unjust to accuse us of « a glaring lack of environmental commitment ».

Greenpeace confirmed receipt of the letter, while regretting we did not opt for the High Carbon Stock approach developed by their organization and pointing out that we could hence run an important commercial risk.

Nevertheless, the Socfin Group's « zero deforestation » policy takes into account most of the aspects covered by the HCS approach, more specifically:

- Respect of local and indigenous communities' rights;
- Protection of local communities' means of subsistence by protecting HCV areas (« key role for meeting the basic needs of the local communities »);
- Protection of primary and HCV forest;
- Reduction of greenhouse gases emissions.

The « standards » Greenpeace refers to, are not based on any scientific facts, neither are their definitions of « level 0 of deforestation » or of the « forest ».

These inaccuracies demonstrate the ill-founded nature of their allegations.

Not one Group entity is involved in the « deforestation » of whichever « primary » or « intact » forest, depending on the expression indiscriminately used by Greenpeace.

Greenpeace does not hesitate to attack SOCFIN based exclusively on non-verified nor documented allegations, coming from not recognized small groups.

Greenpeace states that the concessions attributed to SOCFIN in Africa are only partially exploited, which is correct, but that these plantations could « double in the coming years... », which is, on the other hand, completely incorrect.

Moreover, Greenpeace concludes that this could entail catastrophic consequences for the local population, whose food supply will be seriously compromised.

Again, Greenpeace's allegations are obviously inaccurate.



SOCFIN invests in old plantations by replanting areas that were previously cultivated.

Our approach has always included a sustainability aspect as we ensure the preservation of the existing forests: this is why hardly 50% of our concession surfaces are actually exploited.

As an example, demonstrating the incorrectness and inaccuracies of Greenpeace: the 1,800 ha of forest in Sao Tomé were never cleared, only old plantations were replanted.

The climate threats constituted by SOCFIN's operations in Africa do not reflect the reality.

Likewise for the severe « social conflicts » generated by SOCFIN's operations in Africa.

As in every global company, disagreements can occur. However, they have been very rare and primarily instigated by third parties, without consulting the employees or the inhabitants of the surrounding villages.

SOCFIN has normal relations with the representative social bodies, village authorities and national administrative authorities.

We emphasize once again: any reference to such social conflicts is a mere fantasy.

On the contrary, the Group's operations contribute greatly to the development of the rural areas where we operate, because of the construction of social infrastructure (health and educational facilities) and collective infrastructure (for example: villages, roads, bridges, electricity and water supply...)

SOCFIN is never, neither directly nor indirectly, owner of the mentioned concessions but only brings them under cultivation as a tenant within the framework of a long lease. The concessions and forests covered by the lease remain the exclusive property of the State.

The U-turn of Greenpeace, who positions itself as the least questionable of all groups adverse to SOCFIN, outrages us just as much as its report and the insidious confusions, created with the bold objective to manipulate the non-informed reader and to discredit all SOCFIN operations.