

SOCFIN and SOCAPALM formally deny the accusations of the Belgian National Contact Point of the OECD (NCP) dated 24/11/2015

It is with consternation that SOCFIN has learned about the press release from the Belgian National Contact Point of the OECD, in which SOCFIN is accused of violating OECD guidelines.

SOCAPALM and SOCFIN formally deny the accusations of the NGO's mentioned in the press release, surprisingly issued by the OECD's Belgian National Contact Point.

SOCAPALM has at various occasions proposed to investigate into the grievances, provided that these discussions are held with the representative interlocutors.

SOCAPALM and SOCFIN insist on reaffirming its full adherence to OECD guidelines with respect to plantation operations, today in Cameroon and tomorrow elsewhere.

The SOCFIN Group plantations are globally recognized as an example in the field of ecological management, staff relations, and above all the improvement of the living conditions and the regional development in each country where the Group operates (roads, public services, schools, hospitals, epidemic prevention...).

That is why both SOCAPALM and SOCFIN are deeply offended by the unfunded accusations originating from organisations, which are completely ignorant of the plantation business, working conditions and local achievements, accusations that will be subject to legal proceedings in view of their contents.

On November 10th 2015, the Chairman of SOCAPALM sent a letter to the Chairman of the Belgian OECD, in which he repeated SOCAPALM's willingness to discuss this matter in order to ensure SOCAPALM's full adherence to OECD guidelines, however clarifying that this discussion needs to be held in the presence of Cameroon's public authorities and SOCAPALM.

In this way, the Chairman emphasized that one of the main missions of SOCAPALM consists in promoting the economic and social development of all sites where the Company is operating, in respecting the relevant applicable laws and regulations, in contributing to the implementation of a set of measures for environmental conservation, and in general, in acting as a vector for sustainable development in Cameroon.

Moreover, each meeting must include a representative of the State of Cameroon, as the issues raised pertain to the public authorities (land issues, compensation of surrounding communities, environmental issues).

At the initiative of SOCAPALM, the Prefect of the Sanaga Maritime Department in Cameroon, the geographically competent authority, has established, by prefectural decision dated 23 September 2015, a permanent tripartite dialogue platform between SOCAPALM, the surrounding communities of SOCAPALM and the State of Cameroon, in order to ensure a peaceful living environment for all while respecting the laws of the Republic.

The press releases issued yesterday illustrate that the NCP has deliberately ignored the clarifications provided by SOCAPALM.

In order to further support their claims, certain NGO's did not hesitate to stir up unrest locally, leading to police intervention and material damage.

The Belgian NCP, however, laments a so-called lack of respect for the OECD guidelines, based only on the claims of these litigant organisations and without even having tried to verify these accusations.

SOCAPALM and SOCFIN hereby firmly deny the NCP's unfunded accusations.

These accusations are even less acceptable since they originate from an international organisation of which the reliability and competence are unanimously respected.