

**Global Witness**

**Independent Observer in support of the**

**Application of the Law in the Cameroon**

**Forestry Sector**

**Independent Report No. 010Fr**

Location: **Mvila *Département***

Date: **20th March 2002**

Team members:

**Valérie Vauthier, Director of Global Witness Project**

**Albert K Barume, Assistant Director**

**Owada Jean Cyrille, Forester**

**Serge Christian Moukouri, Forester**

**Célestine Tangyie Ché, Driver**

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# 1 Facts

Date of mission : **20th March 2002**

Licence: **VC 09-02-132**

Company concerned : **Wijma**

## **20th March 2002: meeting with the UCC at Ebolowa**

On 20th March 2002, Global Witness went to Ebolowa to join the inspection mission carried out by UCC (*l'Unité Centrale de Contrôle*) agents. The latter immediately expressed their surprise that the Global Witness team had arrived without prior warning. The said agents then declared that Global Witness must request explicit authorisation from the Minister before joining this official mission.

Demonstrating a misapprehension of the project's Terms of Reference, Mr Ndankep Tchakounté Henry of the UCC then accused Global Witness of wanting to take over the inspection duties and thus prevent the UCC agents from collecting *perdiems*.

Following the remarks outlined above, the UCC agents decided to telephone the UCC Co-ordinator, Madame Assoumou, in order to clarify the situation.

Despite Global Witness asking for the call to be made in its presence, Mme Esso Danièle of the UCC moved away from the rest of the team to telephone the Co-ordinator. Following this telephone conversation, which no-one else present was able to hear, the Global Witness team was told that it could join the mission, but that the UCC and Global Witness should produce separate reports. Given that this proposition was in line with the decision taken at the meeting of 23rd October 2001, under the terms of which the UCC and Global Witness would continue joint missions and produce separate reports, it was agreed that the UCC and Global Witness would go to the field together.

A discussion nevertheless ensued, in the course of which the UCC said again that Global Witness should have authorisation to join the inspection missions, and should have given at least a week's notice in the present case. Global Witness pointed out that the Terms of Reference do not require the Independent Observer to have authorisation in order to be able to join a UCC mission. Neither do the Terms of Reference indicate that the Independent Observer should give notice before accompanying a UCC mission. In fact, the Terms of Reference state that "the Independent Observer will track the management of inspection missions by the UCC, it will have access to all documents relevant to these missions and will observe all phases of the inspection ...".

Furthermore, Global Witness had delivered, into her own hands, a letter advising the co-ordinator of the UCC of its intention to join the official mission on the same day that Global Witness had been informed of the said mission, i.e. the day before it was due to take place; it had thus not had time to give any more warning.

Global Witness had not been able to join the inspection mission in the south any earlier in its capacity as Independent Observer, as it had not been informed of the mission's itinerary.

## **2 Departure for the field**

At around 11.20 am, about thirty minutes along the road in the forest, the UCC vehicle stopped at the following GPS point:

Co-ordinates:

32N 0759541  
UTM 0309084

Mr Ndankep Tchakounté Henry asked to speak to the head of the Global Witness team, and reported that the members of the inspection mission were refusing to be accompanied by Global Witness. As an alternative, and speaking on behalf of the UCC, Mme Ezzo Danièle suggested that Global Witness undertake an independent mission on a different site from the one where her team was working.

In response to this proposal the Global Witness team pointed out that it was waiting for clarification on the procedures for carrying out independent missions and that if it could not join the official mission in question as Independent Observer, in line with point 3.2 of the Terms of Reference, it would return to Yaoundé.

Replying to the objection of the Global Witness team, Mr Ndankep Tchakounté Henry of the UCC accused the Independent Observer of not respecting the sovereignty of Cameroon, and maintained his refusal to let Global Witness join the inspection mission.

Global Witness, following the refusal of a joint mission, thus decided not to carry out an independent mission, while waiting for clarification on procedures, and went back to Yaoundé at 11.40 am.

## **3 Conclusion**

The members of the UCC noted above refused to co-operate with the Independent Observer in participating in an official mission.

## **4 Recommendation**

Global Witness suggests that new members of the UCC and those not familiar with the function and mandate of the Independent Observer should be given an introduction to the Terms of Reference of the Project, with a view to making them better informed in relation to facilitating joint missions, among other issues.