

# Project of Independent Observer in Support of Forest Law Enforcement in Cameroon

**Approved by the Ministry of  
Environment and Forestry**

## **Report of the Independent Observer**

**No. 091En**

*Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission*

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**Title**   ○ FMU 10 021  
**Location**   Boumba and Ngoko Division, East  
                  Province  
**Mission date**   08 May 2004  
**Companies**   ○ Green Valley (Title Holder)

**Independent Observer Team (Global Witness):**

*Mr Reiner Tegtmeyer, Project Director  
Mr Jean Cyrille Owada, Technical Assistant  
Mr Célestine Tangyie Ché, Driver*

## TABLE DES MATIERES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	1
2. RESOURCES USED .....	2
3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION .....	2
4 CONSTRAINTS .....	2
5. MISSION'S FINDINGS .....	2
5.1 Opening of the boundaries of the ASV with bulldozers .....	2
5.2 History of control within the Groupe Decolvenaere.....	4
5.3 Concerns regarding follow-up of recommendations made by the Reading Committee.....	4
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	5

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Central Control Unit (CCU), accompanied by the Independent Observer (Global Witness), undertook a mission to the Forest Management Units (FMU) 10 021 located in the Boumba and Ngoko Division of the East Province.

This mission that took place on 8 May 2004 was part of a CCU control mission programme started on 5 May 2004. Before visiting the logging site of Annual Standing Volume (ASV) No.05, the mission held talks with Mr Guy Decolvenaere, Director General of the Groupe Decolvenaere, and owner of the Green Valley (GVI) company, beneficiary of FMU 10 021.

In the field, the mission inspected the boundaries of the Annual Standing Volume, logging documents, and log ponds.

The main conclusions of the Independent Observer concerning this mission are as follows:

- o The company Green Valley marked the boundaries of ASV No.05 by roads approximately 9m in width. By doing so, the company violated regulations governing boundary marking and also felled trees without authorisation, notably trees more than 15cm in diameter, trees that may belong to protected species. It should be noted, however, that the company Green Valley has made an effort to minimise logging impact on the environment by reducing the number of access roads and hauling tracks.

In view of the above, **the Independent Observer recommends:**

- o That the company Green Valley be summoned to a hearing to address an official statement of offence issued for violating Article 4 of Order No. 0222/A/MINEF of 25 May 2001, and to make reparation for damages caused to the State.

### **The Reading Committee recommends that**

- o The Forestry Department prepare a circular letter, with copies to the economic operators, reminding the External Services about regulations relating to the opening of boundaries of Annual Standing Volumes;
- o From this point on, any application for annual standing volumes be accompanied by a sketch of the forest road network.

## 2. RESOURCES USED

- 1 Toyota Hilux Pick up
- 1 Digital camera
- 1 Video camara
- 2 GPS
- 1 Laptop computer

## 3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

The mission was composed of Mr Kouotou Aboubakar, agent of the Department of Transformation and Promotion of Forest Products (DTP), Mission Head; Mr Mamene Pierre Marcel and Mrs Manhouli Marie, agents of the Central Control Unit; Mr Afene Obam James, Senior staff at the Permanent Secretariat for the Environment (PSE); and two members of the technical team of the Independent Observer. Mr Jean Claude Ndo Nkoumou, Divisional Delegate of the Environment and Forestry (DDEF) for Boumba and Ngoko, and Mr Fotso Antoine, Head of the Local Forestry Post, joined the mission

## 4 CONSTRAINTS

The mission faced no constraints.

## 5. MISSION'S FINDINGS

### 5.1 Opening of the boundaries of the ASV with bulldozers

In the field, the mission inspected the positioning of the Annual Standing Volume, the marking of its boundaries, and relevant field operations documents.

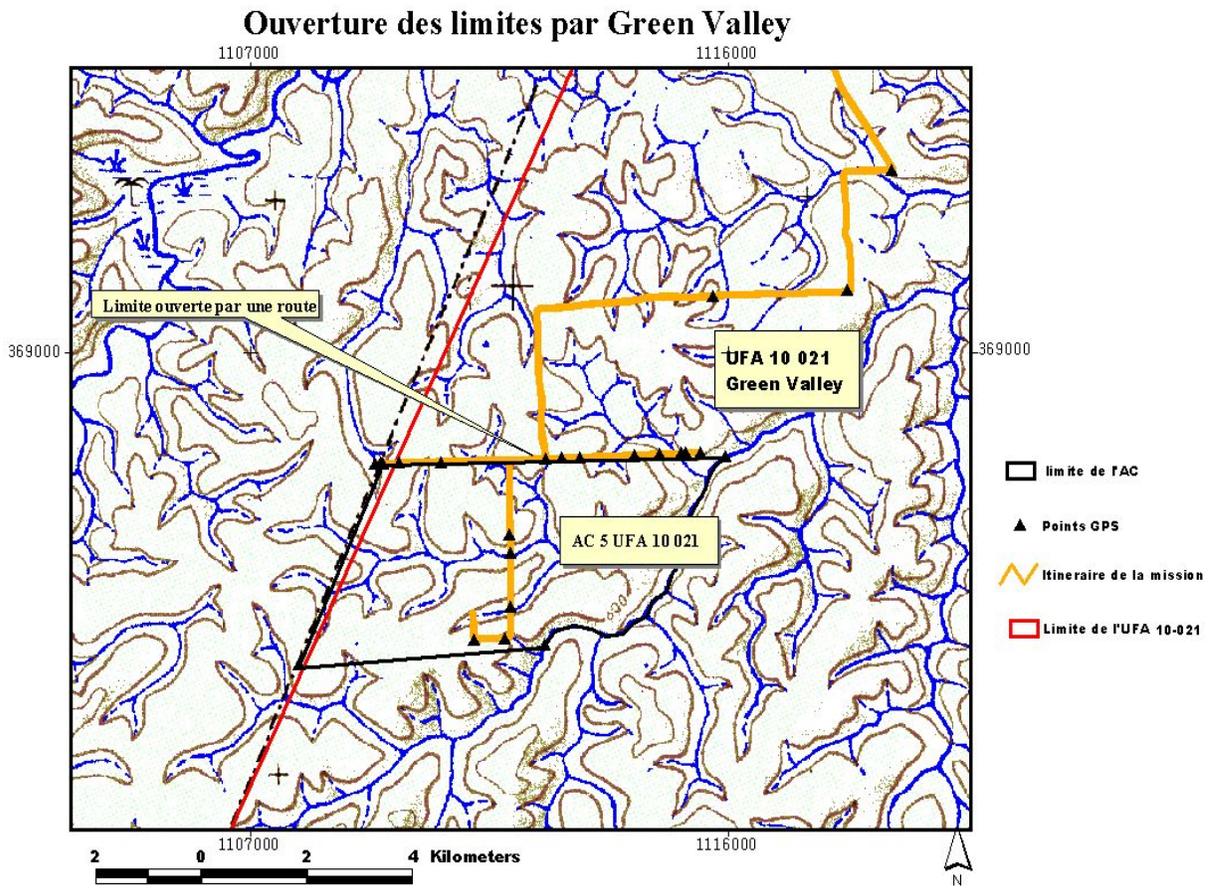
This inspection revealed that the company Green Valley opened the boundaries of ASV No.05 of FMU 10 021 using roads about 18m wide (road and shoulders), as shown in the photo below. The Independent Observer also noted that the boundary demarcations in question were not marked with red paint.

Article 4 paragraph 3 of Order No. 0222/A/MINEF of 25 May 2001 governing the procedures for elaborating, approving, monitoring and controlling the implementation of management plans of production forests in the permanent forest estate stipulates that: *“Within the permanent forest estate, boundaries between FMUs, the blocks and boundaries between annual standing volumes shall be marked by a red-painted **path of two meters width** where all herbaceous vegetation, shrubs and creepers are cleared to the ground and all unprotected trees of less than fifteen (15) cm diameter are cut. The boundaries of the annual standing volume must be marked before any logging takes place”*.

**Photo:** Boundaries of ASV No.05 opened by the Green Valley company



**Map:** Annual Standing Volume No.05 of FMU 10 021



During the irregular opening of this road, the company Green Valley felled trees not authorised for extraction, namely trees of more than 15cm in diameter. This offence is punishable by Article 155 of Forestry Law.

The mission measured the road and its shoulders for the purpose of the assessment of damages. A telephone conversation with Central MINEF revealed that the Forestry Department is currently assessing this method of opening boundaries. The mission, therefore, thought it useful to contact the Forestry Department before issuing an administrative letter summoning Green Valley to a hearing addressing an official statement of offence.

### **5.2 History of control within the Groupe Decolvenaere**

On 31 May 2002, the Central Control Unit undertook a control mission to Annual Standing Volume No.01 of FMU 10 052, granted to the Société Tropical d'Exploitation Forestière (SOTREF) for the 2001-2002 fiscal year. Accompanied by the Independent Observer (Global Witness), this mission noted the practice of using bulldozers to open the boundaries of ASV No.01.. In a report produced at the end of the mission, the Independent Observer recommended that litigation be opened against SOTREF, a company belonging to the Groupe Decolvenaere. The Reading Committee approved the Independent Observer's recommendation and instructed the CCU to summon the management of the company SOTREF to a hearing upon issuance of an official statement of offence.

During a new mission undertaken to the same FMU on 14 August 2003, the Independent Observer noted and reported to the Reading Committee the same technique (the bulldozing of roads to open boundaries). being used within Annual Standing Volume No.03 (valid for the 2003 fiscal year). The Reading Committee once more recommended SOTREF be called to order and asked to comply with regulations governing the opening and marking of boundaries of annual standing volumes. The Reading Committee also recommended that a mission be sent to verify the offence and assess damages caused (see Reports of the Independent Observer No. 13 and No. 72).

### **5.3 Concerns regarding follow-up of recommendations made by the Reading Committee**

Since the month of May 2002, the Independent Observer has documented several cases where irregular methods have been used to open boundaries of annual standing volumes of FMUs granted to the companies of the Groupe Decolvenaere (see Reports No. 013 and No. 072). After examining the Independent Observer's Report No. 013, the Reading Committee instructed the CCU to summon the management of SOTREF in order to serve them with an official statement of offence regarding the said irregularity. An examination of the Independent Observer's Report No. 072 revealed that no action had been taken to this effect and that new instructions had been given to CCU to call the company SOTREF to order and ask it to comply with regulations governing the opening and marking of boundaries of annual standing volumes.

On the ground, the mission observed that no action to this effect had been taken. The company Green Valley of the Groupe Decolvenaere demarcated the boundaries of ASV No.05 of FMU 10 021 by constructing a road. According to the management of the company, the opening of a road on the limits of an annual standing volume facilitates access to contiguous standing volumes, and thus avoids the opening of additional roads. Discussions the mission held with Mr Issac Ayach, Foreman of the companies Green Valley and SOTREF, revealed that the Group had not received any administrative letter interdicting this illegal activity.

The Independent Observer, therefore, has serious concerns re: the follow-up of recommendations made by the Reading Committee, particularly with regard to the important role the Committee plays in terms of the control of logging activities.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the above, **the Independent Observer recommends:**

- o T That the company Green Valley be summoned to a hearing to address an official statement of offence issued for violating Article 4 of Order No. 0222/A/MINEF of 25 May 2001, and to make reparation for damages caused to the State.

### **The Reading Committee recommends that**

- o The Forestry Department prepare a circular letter, with copies to the economic operators, reminding the External Services about regulations relating to the opening of boundaries of Annual Standing Volumes;
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