

# 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. 092En**

*Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission*

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- Titles**   ○ FMU 10 007  
              ○ FMU 10 011  
              ○ FMU 10 015
- Locations**   Boumba and Ngoko Division, East  
                  Province
- Mission dates**   13 and 14 May 2004
- Companies**   ○ SEBC  
                  ○ SAB  
                  ○ CIBC

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Observer (Global Witness) accompanied a team of the Central Control Unit (CCU) on a mission on 13 May 2004. This mission visited Forest Management Units (FMUs) of the Groupe Thanry Nos. 10 015, 10 007 and 10 011, granted respectively to the Compagnie Industrielle du Bois au Cameroun (CIBC), the Société d'Exploitation Forestière des Bois du Cameroun (SEBC) and the Société Africaine des Bois (SAB), located in the Boumba and Ngoko Division of the East Province.

Only FMU 10 015 granted to the company CIBC, was operating at the time of the mission. The mission inspected the opening of boundaries of valid Annual Standing Volumes (ASV) and noted that the provisions of regulations governing the opening of boundaries had been respected in both FMU 10 007 and 10 011. However, the mission advised the foreman responsible for both ASVs to renew these boundaries before commencing any activity in the standing volumes.

In FMU 10 015, of which ASV No. 22 is valid for operations in the current fiscal year, the mission toured the access roads and main hauling tracks and inspected boundaries as well as stump markings. The mission found that the company CIBC had committed several forestry law offences, notably the non marking of timber felled in a state forest, and false declaration in field operations documents (DF10)

Discussions held with officials of the Groupe Thanry resulted in the observation by the Independent Observer that the companies CIBC, SAB and SEBC are either operating under sub-contracts without prior approval by the Minister of the Environment and Forestry or owning as a de-facto entity a total FMU surface area exceeding 200,000 hectares.

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

- That CIBC be summoned to a hearing addressing an official statement of offence for:
  - improper keeping of field operation documents (false declarations made in regard to DF 10)
  - poor marking of tree stumps
- That MINEF investigate the nature and legality of the collaboration between and among the companies CIBC, SAB and SEBC;
- That the responsible officials of the companies cited be summoned and litigation be undertaken for in case of breach of law.

## **2. RESOURCES USED**

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

## **3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION**

The mission consisted of Mr Kouotou Aboubakar, agent of the Department of Transformation and Promotion of Forest Products (DTP), Head of Mission; 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 Ndo Nkoumou, Divisional Delegate of the Environment and Forestry (DDEF) for Boumba and Ngoko, joined the mission.

## **4 CONSTRAINTS**

The mission encountered no obstacles in the field.

## **5. MISSION'S FINDINGS**

The companies CIBC, SEBC and SAB are beneficiaries of three Forest Management Units (UFA) in the Lokomo area in the Boumba and Ngoko Division, namely FMU 10 015 with a surface area of 130,273 hectares, FMU 10 007 with a surface area of 122.294 hectares and FMU 10 011 with a surface area of 48.554 hectares. All of these Management Units supply one and the same wood processing unit, based at Lokomo, a unit operated by the company SEBC.

### **5.1 Observations of the mission**

#### **a) False declaration in the field operation documents and DF10**

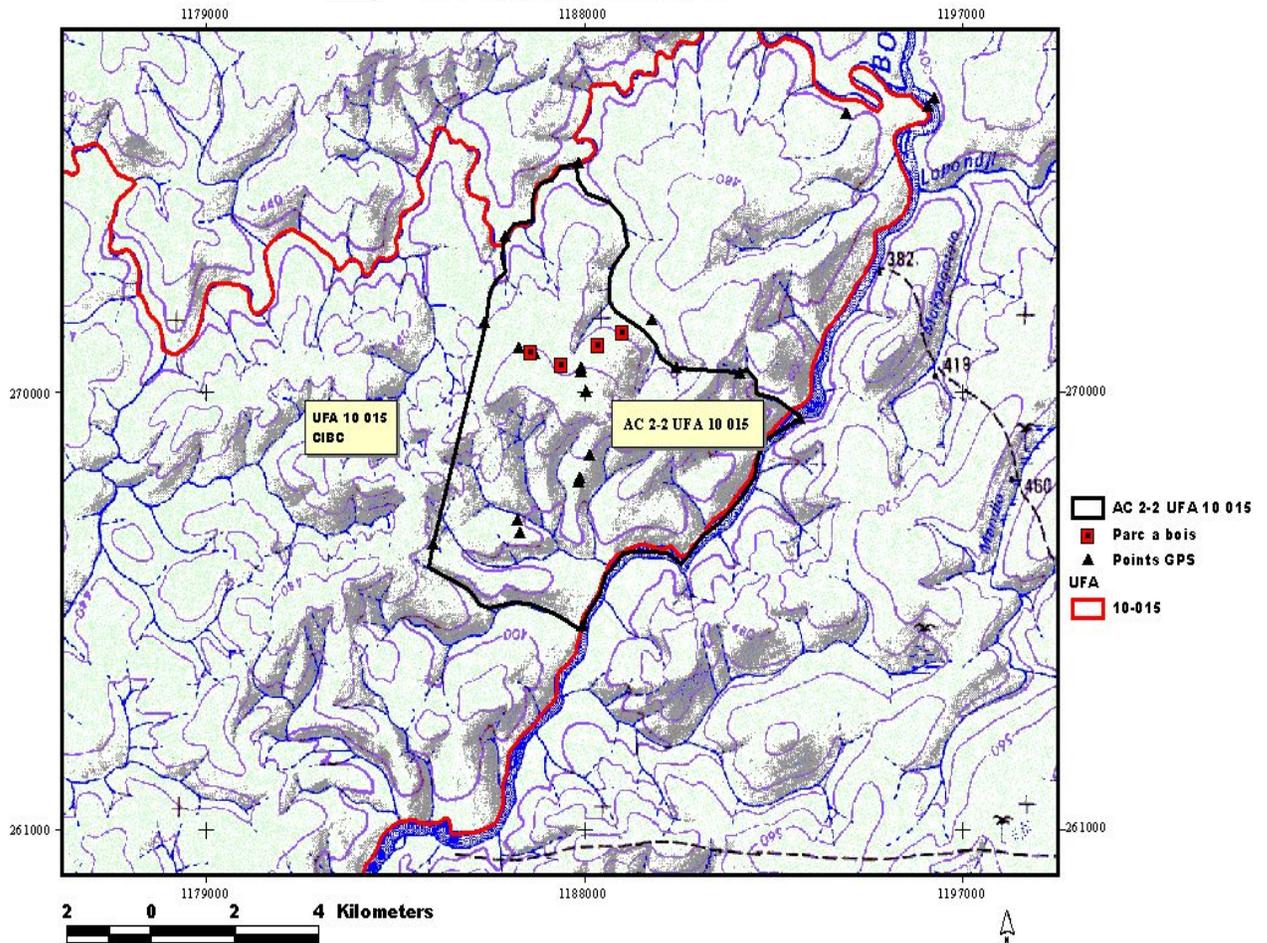
Article 125 of the Decree of 23 August 1995 stipulates that all specifications of a wood log must be recorded in the field operation document (DF10). Details that must be recorded in these documents include the log's diameter, length and volume.

While controlling compliance with this regulatory provision, the mission observed that in some of CIBC's log ponds, the material specifications of a number of logs did not correspond with the data recorded in the field operation documents.

Out of 10 (ten) logs selected randomly in one pond, 7 (seven) showed an inconsistency in their recorded length: the measurements stated in the field operation documents were smaller lower than those noted in the field. The discrepancies in length (actual versus recorded) ranged from 10 to 36 cm. This recorded reduction in the length of logs automatically leads to a reduced volume recorded declared in the field operation document and thus to a reduction in felling taxes due. These acts constitute the offence of fraud in a field operation document issued by the forestry administration, acts punishable as prescribed in Article 158 of the 20 January 1994

Law. This offence was recorded in an official statement of offence established by the CCU against the company CIBC.

**Map: 2-2 UFA 10 015 CIBC**



**b) Poor marking of felled trees**

The mission took note that all logs in CIBC's log ponds prepared for transport carried marks on one side only, notably at the larger end. This act constitutes a violation of legal regulations addressing the marking of logs.

**Photo:** Unmarked sides of logs in a log pond



**c) Sub-contracting without prior approval of the Minister**

Forest Management Unit (FMU) 10 015 was granted to the Etablissement ETMC on 27 March 1998. This FMU was later transferred to the Compagnie Industrielle du Bois au Cameroun (CIBC) by Decision No. 00668/D/MINEF/CAB of 26 January 2000.

In the field, the mission held discussions with several officials of the Groupe Thanry, namely Messrs J. D. Toto Ndongue, Administrative Director of the Group; Jean Pierre Fines, Head of the Management Department of the Group, and Jean-François Peroteau, Site Manager and Foreman of FMUs 10 007, 10 011 and 10 015.

The various discussions brought to light that the company SEBC has been operating in the Boumba and Ngoko Division since 1982, and that the three companies in question are managed by the same group of senior management staff, and via the same head office in Douala. FMUs 10 007 (SEBC), 10 011 (SAB) and 10 015 (CIBC) supply their timber to one and the same sawmill (SEBC sawmill at Lokomo). These FMUs have been put under successive timber extraction operations by taking into account the distance between them and the saw mill, the surface area of the relevant ASV and the seasonal weather conditions. Thus, logging operations start in FMU 10 015 sometime between January and June, continue in FMU 10 007 between July and September; and conclude in FMU 10 011 in December. According to the officials interviewed, the Groupe Thanry uses the same team of workers for all three FMUs. It was also revealed that the three companies use the same logging operations equipment.

In order to justify the absence of sub-contracts approved by MINEF, the officials the mission met in the field maintained that as members of the same group, the concerned companies were not obliged to sign sub-contracts.

This assertion could lead to the offence of creating a company with the effect of increasing the total FMU surface area held by the same initiator or group of initiators to above 200,000 hectares. In fact, the cumulative total of the respective surface areas of the Forest Management Units granted to these companies is 301.061 hectares.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Discussions held with officials of the Groupe Thanry led to the Independent Observer's conclusion that the companies CIBC, SAB and SEBC are either operating under sub-contracts without prior approval by the Minister of the Environment and Forestry, or owning as a de-facto entity a total FMU surface area exceeding 200,000 hectares

Furthermore, the company CIBC was found guilty of several offences, namely the non-marking of felled timber in a state forest and making false declarations in field operation documents (DF10).

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

- That CIBC be summoned to a hearing addressing an official statement of offence for:
  - improper keeping of field operation documents (false declarations made in regard to DF 10)
  - poor marking of tree stumps
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