

Project of Independent Observation in Support of
Forest Law Enforcement in Cameroon

**Validated by the Reading
Committee**

Report of the Independent Observer

No. 107En

Central Control Unit – Independent Observer Joint Mission

Title	FMU 08 006
Location	Issandja, Yoko, Mbam and Kim Division, Central Province
Mission date	02 August 2004
Company	SFB

Independent Observer Team (Global Witness):
Mr Serge C. Moukouri, Technical Assistant
Mr Emmanuel Tamounang, Driver

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 2 August 2004, a joint mission of the Central Control Unit and the Independent Observer visited Forest Management Unit (FMU) 08 006 at Issandja, in the Mbam and Kim Division. This mission formed part of the routine control mission programme that commenced on 28 July 2004. Its aim was to monitor the forestry activities being undertaken in FMU 08 006.

Located within forest concession No. 1002, FMU 08 006 was awarded to the Société Forestière de Bouraka (SFB) in 1997. Its management plan has already been approved and the final agreement signed. For 2004, SFB requested and obtained an annual operating authorisation for Annual Standing Volume (ASV) No.03.

In the field, the mission noted that no activity was taking place in the current valid ASV. However, touring ASV No.02, which was logged during the course of 2003, the mission noticed that around 30 unbarked logs had been abandoned in two wood depots. The mission also noticed recently cut logs in the same Standing Volume. Both the abandonment of logs in wood depots in the forest and logging activities in a non-valid Annual Standing Volume constitute infractions of the forest law. Due to the absence of SFB officials in the field, none of these infractions formed the object of Official Statements of Offence.

In view of the above, **the Independent Observer recommends** the summoning of officials of the SFB company to a hearing with regard to the abandonment of 150m³ of timber in wood depots and the felling of 20m³ of *iroko* in a state forest, beyond the permitted period of operations.

2. RESOURCES USED

- 1 Nissan pick-up
- 1 digital camera
- 1 video recorder
- 2GPS
- 1 laptop

3. COMPOSITION OF THE MISSION

Ms Manhouli and Messrs Kongapé and Neckmen of the CCU, Mr Bikié of the IT unit of MINEF and Mr Moukouri of the Independent Observer's technical team took part in this mission.

4. CONSTRAINTS

No difficulties were encountered in carrying out this mission.

5 RESULTS OF THE MISSION

5.1 Observations

The mission did not visit Annual Standing Volume No.03, valid for 2004, since no activity had yet started. According to information gathered in the field, this situation would seem to be due to problems SFB has with the company to whom work in this FMU is being sub-contracted.

Nonetheless, touring Standing Volume No.02, which was operational in 2003, the mission observed that:

- Logs were still lying in some of this Standing Volume's wood depots. In fact, more than thirty logs of different species - including *okan*, *ako*, *fraké* and *iroko* - were found in two wood depots of Annual Standing Volume No 02 (see photos)
- Recently cut logs in ASV No.02 had been hand sawn (see photo). The mission came across about 10 workers responsible for transporting the sawn timber from the site to the road.

Photos 1 and 2: Abandoned logs in log ponds in ASV No.02



Photos 3 and 4: Sawn timber in a storage and processing site



5.2 Analysis of the Independent Observer

The observations made by the mission give the Independent Observer the opportunity to make the following comments. With regard to the abandonment of logs in forest wood depots, article 126 of decree No. 95/531 regulating application of the forest law states that holders of forest exploitation permits are required to remove all logs originating from felled trees with the exception of those declared not fit for use by forest administration officials. For those logs that can be abandoned in the forest, the reason for this must be noted in the project record file. And yet, with regard to the logs found in the wood depots of ASV No.02, there was no indication that these demonstrated such reason for abandonment. For this reason, the Independent Observer considers that SFB has violated the current law and is liable to the sanctions provided by the law.

With regard to current forest legislation in Cameroon, an Annual Standing Volume is issued for a non-renewable period of one year in the case of a provisional agreement, or for one year renewable once in the case of a final agreement. In the latter case, renewal is granted on the basis of the results of an inventory check and an annual operating permit issued. Otherwise, the Standing Volume is considered as closed to exploitation. To continue operations in such a Standing Volume would amount to exploitation beyond

the agreed period. In state forests, this offence is provided for and sanctioned by Article 158 of the forest law of 20 January 1994. As the beneficiary of the FMU in question, SFB is answerable for this offence. According to the terms of article 42, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the law of 20 January 1994, it remains answerable to the forest administration for the good enforcement of its obligations under all circumstances.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following this mission, and in the light of the above observations, the Independent Observer concludes that the Société Forestière de Bouraka was responsible for two forest offences, and consequently liable to the sanctions stipulated by the law.

For this reason **the Independent Observer recommends** the summoning of SFB officials to a hearing with regard to the abandonment of 150m³ of timber in wood depots and the felling of 20m³ of *iroko* in a state forest, beyond the permitted period of operation.