

DENUNCIATIONS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY PUSH THE ADMINISTRATION TO ACT

Fines, suspensions of authorizations, opening of litigations are all actions taken by the Ministry in charge of forests following the denunciation reports submitted within the framework of the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System(SNOIE).

Civil society organizations' (CSOs) denunciations made through the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE) have been pushing the forest administration to intervene more and more effectively. Indeed, as explained by the Head of the National Control Brigade, Colonel Rodrigue ELLA, the SNOIE is now part of the informants' networks used by the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) to carry out its activities of monitoring and to sanction offenders found guilty of acts of illegal logging.

Since February 2016, among the fourteen (14) denunciation reports produced by CSOs within the framework of the SNOIE and transmitted to the MINFOF, ten (10) of them led to a reaction of the administration in charge of forests. And the responses of this competent authority in charge of forests' management were notified to the coordination of the SNOIE. These formal notifications from the Ministry, which are certainly not always automatic, specify the actions taken by the administration in cases of suspected illegal logging denounced in civil society reports.



JOINT MISSIONS ORGANIZED

Among these actions, the raids of the brigade controllers are prominent in the areas mentioned in denunciation reports, litigations opened against exploiters pinpointed in the reports of Independent Monitoring (IM). In February 2016, the denunciation report concerning the localities of Ngwei I, Mapoubi and Ebombe (Littoral region) produced by Forests and Rural Development (FODER) and local partners in the framework of SNOIE activities led the MINFOF to open a litigation against the firm "Les Grandes scieries d'Edea", in which evidences of logging not meeting standards for forestry intervention were gathered. The latter, though holder of a timber removal authorization, was found guilty of fraudulent exploitation of timber seized by the administration in charge of forests in the localities of Ngwei and Mapoubi.

Also, from November 2016 to February 2017, a series of denunciations carried out within the framework of the SNOIE, caused raids of the Regional Control Brigade (RCB) of the East, the RCB of the South and the RCB of the Littoral on the field. At the end of these raids, sanctions were taken by the MINFOF against the offenders regarding the relevance of the facts denounced and observed during monitoring missions. It was noted that, fraudulent timbers were seized at Logbii in the Littoral for the auction, fines that were

inflicted to the offender in the case of Mboumo in the East region, and administrative sanctions against agents of the MINFOF for whom the denunciations of Mabenanga and Bissiang in the South region would have contributed.

SUBSTANTIAL FINES FOR THE OFFENDERS

Denunciation reports of civil society produced following the procedures of the SNOIE, also pushed the MINFOF after monitoring missions to impose heavy fines to offenders. Companies denounced by the civil society, led the administration in charge of forests to suspend their license to forestry profession for a period of six (6) months. This is the case of the company Sibois and the COVINKO community forest respectively located in Southern and Eastern Cameroon, which, after being denounced in the framework of the SNOIE, were found guilty in the Summary of Infractions of the fourth Quarter 2016. They are accused of "logging by sale of standing volume in the national domain beyond limits" and "involvement in illegal logging, failure to comply with the simple management plan and financial misappropriation".



DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS AGAINST AGENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE

The denunciations made by civil society in the framework of the SNOIE also led the administration in charge of forests to take "disciplinary" sanctions against its agents. Indeed, only few months after external independent monitoring reports (EIM) on suspected illegal logging in southern zones, in the Sanaga Maritime and Mbam Inoubou divisions were deposited on the table of the MINFOF, Minister Philip Ngole NGWESE dismissed a total of nine (9) heads of forest control and hunting posts (CPFCs) from these areas. Decision No. 081 of the Minister was publicized on March 21 2017.

To this day, four (4) CSOs are involved in the implementation of the SNOIE, the association FODER (Forests and Rural Development) which assures the Coordination, organizations like PAPEL (Livestock and Biodiversity Preservation) and CeDLA (Centre for Local and Alternative Development), which respectively operate in the East and in the South; and Transparency International-Cameroon, which assures post-denunciation lobbying. SUHE, a community-based CSO located in the Sanaga Maritime division, also contributed to the denunciations made available to the MINFOF through the project Community-based Real time forest monitoring (RTM).

The denunciations of these CSO members of the SNOIE

reveal, among other things, unauthorized exploitation in the forests of the national domain, exploitation without an Annual Certificate of Exploitation (CAE) in a communal forest, unauthorized exploitation in community forests, exploitation beyond limits, failure to comply with technical standards for intervention in forests and non-compliance with the social clauses of the specifications. All these denunciations are currently coming from three forest regions, particularly East, South and Littoral. These 3 regions were targeted by the baseline study carried out in 2016 on the level of forest legality/illegality. The actions of the SNOIE are already very perceptible in these regions and an evaluation is still foreseen to assess on the basis of the initial indicators, the level of decline in forest illegality in these regions and consequently the impact of the EIM■



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