

Zoulabot Ancien  
Yokadouma Arrondissement  
Boumba-et-Ngoko Department  
East Region  
Cameroon

24 May 2018

Dear Special Rapporteur,

We, the undersigned Baka from the village of Zoulabot Ancien, would like to explain to you the suffering we are going through because of conservation.

Nki National Park was created in 2005<sup>1</sup> and ever since we have lost the forest that our ancestors left us. We cannot go hunting safely, or climb trees to gather honey, or dig for wild yams or collect our medicinal plants.

The wildlife guards have abused us, beaten us and tortured us for more than 10 years. We are told that international law and the OECD guidelines say that our free, prior and informed consent is required for these projects. We have not accepted these projects that are ruining our lives. We understand that WWF, the GEF and the UNDP are funding the park and its wildlife guards.

We ask you to write to the Cameroonian government and to make sure that all those who are funding these projects<sup>2</sup> come and hear our suffering and seek our consent.

Yours sincerely,



MONJOKO Andre



MAYI Dieudonné



KEMA Rémy



LALA Nestor



EWUNJI Pierre



DJENO Bernadette

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<sup>1</sup> Decree No. 2005/3283/PM of 6 October, 2005

<sup>2</sup> Sources of support for the Nki National Park include WWF and the UNDP-implemented Global Environment Facility Project #9155, which is co-funded by GEF, UNDP, ZSL, IUCN, AWF, UNESCO, WWF and the Cameroonian government. It forms part of the TRIDOM "landscape," which is funded by UNESCO's Central Africa World Heritage Forest Initiative.



KEMA Félix



LESSA Michel



NGONGO Denis

Ngoli  
Moloundou Arrondissement  
Boumba-et-Ngoko Department  
East Region  
Cameroon

29 May 2018

Dear Special Rapporteur,

We here in Ngoli are suffering so much because of the Lobeke National Park and trophy-hunting zones.<sup>3</sup> If the guards find you, even with just one antelope, they beat you and make you take your clothes off.

If you go into the forest to gather wild mangos and they find you with traps, they beat the whole camp, even children. That's what happened last year, in the Debale forest. Two ecoguards and several soldiers arrived. The ecoguards told us: "You must leave the forest and stay in the village. If we see you here we will beat you. If you have traps or guns you need to give them to us." But we had nothing. They started beating people to see if we were lying, even a young boy of about 11 years old. They beat him because they thought he would be less able to bear the pain.

They all beat us – the ecoguards and the soldiers – with the flat edge of their machetes, their fists, their belts. They told us to get out and they burned down the whole camp – our mangos, our clothes, everything.

We ask for everyone who gives money to the ecoguards and the park to come and get our consent.<sup>4</sup>

Yours sincerely,



MONJOKO Philémon



BOKO Ernest



EYABO Marie-Joséphine

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<sup>3</sup> Lobeke National Park was formally gazetted by Decree No. 2001/107/CAB/PM/DU on 19 March, 2001. The two trophy-hunting zones are ZICGC 02 and ZICGC 03, both created by Order No. 1465/MINEF/DFAP/CEP/FB on 19 December, 2000 and used today by used by the Spain-based operation Chelet Safaris

<sup>4</sup> Sources of support for Lobeke National Park include WWF and the Fondation Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS), itself financed by the German and French governments and UNESCO. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the TNS landscape, of which Lobeke is a part, as one of its priority landscapes for 2018, and USAID has also designated it as one of its priority areas.



GOALA Alain



DEDE Ngounga

Mbateka  
Moloundou Arrondissement  
Boumba-et-Ngoko Department  
East Region  
Cameroon

30 May 2018

Dear Special Rapporteur,

Our forest is the Lobeke forest. From Lobeke to the Boumba River.<sup>5</sup> The conservationists came and took everything. Now Baka don't go into the forest. If they find you with traps, they beat you. They break your doors, destroy your axe and your spear and your cooking pots. If they beat you and take your things, what are you meant to do? How are you supposed to live?

Now they do so many bad things. But why? In Baka life, everything comes for the forest. Just like a shop, everything we live with comes from the forest. During the dry season we go to a place called Biti; we go there on *molongo*. The forest is our school, our home and our hospital. So during the *molongo* we teach our children in our rich forests: "This is how you find the honey from the stingless bee, honey from the stinging bee, wild yams." So they don't forget these things.

To find enough to live on you need to walk a lot in the forest. So the *molongo* is the forest studies for young Baka men and women. During the *molongo* there are our traditional rites like *jengi* and *yeli* – we organize those in the forest, not here by the road. But now that the forest is forbidden we don't practice that anymore, we are lost and we will all die. Why? Because all the things we lived with before we can't live with anymore. In the life of the Baka there is also the *maka* to teach young Baka the different parts of the forest, to study the forest, how to manage the forest in a sustainable way.

The Baka's management is so different from that of people who don't live in the forest. To take the example of honey: we take a bit and then we leave the rest so that people can visit it again the future. The same for wild yams. Now that we don't do these things we are suffering so much. Before, during times of epidemics, we would go into the forest and hide there. Now our health is suffering so much because we can't go to the forest. When our grandparents took us to the forest, they knew everything, they lived in peace. No disorder, and there were no

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<sup>5</sup> The forest lands of the Baka from Mbateka have been taken to create Lobeke National Park (created by Decree No. 2001/107/CAB/PM/DU on 19 March, 2001) and the trophy-hunting zones ZICGC 09 (created by Order 1236/MINEF/DFAP/CEP/FB of 20 September, 2000), ZICGC 02 and ZICGC 03 both created by Order No. 1465/MINEF/DFAP/CEP/FB on 19 December, 2000).

drunkards. Now we find seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds drunk, falling down in the road. They don't know the way of the Baka.

On *maka* children knew: This is how to get honey; this part of the forest is good; this part of the forest is bad. Now they don't know any of these things. They are lost. Our food is in the forest, our knowledge is in the forest, our hospital is in the forest – and there are no fees. Now we don't eat meat. Before we could hunt for subsistence; now we live so badly. If we send a young man to Lobeke – “Go find this medicinal plant” – he can't do it. He won't get there and he won't recognize the plant. Since conservation arrived we have lost everything. Before we had no problems: children and women could get their medicines. WWF's<sup>6</sup> work has brought us such suffering. Soon we will pass away one by one and our children will have no idea. So we want to take them into the forest. Here you ask a child what season it is – for example, the wild mango season – and he doesn't know. You ask, “What is this forest medicine for?” He doesn't know.

Our life is *molongo*, *mombato*, *maka* and *sendo*. *Sendo* is the short hunting trip. Now before we would go and kill an elephant – just one, because it's big and it feeds everyone. These young men don't know elephants, they have never seen an elephant.

Then the *mombato*, from February to April: men and women would go to the forest for dam-fishing. Now we don't do *mombato*. Now they have cut the forest and we are stuck in the village. No more riches of wild yams, no more medicines, no more fishing, no more hunting for subsistence. That's to say: we are dead.

If this forest was managed by the Baka everything would be conserved; the trees and the subsoil would be all intact. But here we are: with the logging companies, everything is destroyed. But we are the first conservationists of the forest. It's our ancestors who protected all this. All the conservationists must come here and ask: “How do you manage your forest?” Instead of tormenting us, beating us and throwing us in prison. Now no Baka has the courage to go fishing in Lobeke. When they find him with a wild deer and traps he goes to prison. You have no money to put up a defense. Subsistence hunting: it is what our grandparents knew and it's what we know.

Now, WWF: what do they think of us, the original conservationists of this forest? What will our life be like tomorrow? And that of our little children? We want them to come and explain things to us. How can we regain the same way of life as our parents? Even in our “community zone,” ecoguards come and destroy us.

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<sup>6</sup> The Baka term “dobidobi,” used here, applies both to WWF and to the government-employed wildlife guards that WWF supports.

We are told that the African Charter says that our consent is required for major projects on our land. We call for all the organizations that fund conservation here to come and seek our consent.<sup>7</sup>

Yours sincerely,



SINDEMO Vincent



MENONGA Jean-Claude



MIKAMBO Emilie



LINJE Armand



MANGA Prosper



GWANYOLI Sylvain



WANYOLI Samuel



TABESSO Isaac



AWIYA Guilaine



YENA Georges



DJAMI Romain



SANGO Odette



MOMITI Emmanuel



AMBELE Aloïse



NDANGWA Charlotte



ASSILABONDO Mathias



BEMBOULE Gabriel



MAKISSO Mathias



KPOMBONDO Francois



NDUMU Patrick



ADJINA Ernest

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<sup>7</sup> Sources of support for Lobeke National Park include WWF and the Fondation Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS), itself financed by the German and French governments and UNESCO. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the TNS landscape, of which Lobeke is a part, as one of its priority landscapes for 2018, and USAID has also designated it as one of its priority areas.



GWAYENGA Albert



MAKISSO Samuel



MBOMA Gilbert



EBAMI Jean



AMENDI Félix



BAMBO Boniface



NDAMA Sylvain

Mbimbe  
Moloundou Arrondissement  
Boumba-et-Ngoko Department  
East Region  
Cameroon

30 June 2018

Dear Special Rapporteur,

We the Baka of Mbimbe are suffering so badly because we can no longer go into the forest to look for the things that Komba<sup>8</sup> made.

Our children don't know our wild honeys. They don't know our wild yams.

We have lost a lot of our forest to the Lobeke National Park,<sup>9</sup> but the Cameroonian government and WWF have not obtained our consent.

We have lost a lot to the trophy-hunting zones – to the Chelet Safaris company.<sup>10</sup> Once a year we can spend two weeks gathering wild mangos there. If we overstay, they burn our houses and beat us.

For the rest of the year we can't go there. We can't hunt or fish to feed our families, search for forest medicines or show our children the things our parents left us. We beg you to help us, so that all these people come and seek our consent.<sup>11</sup>

Yours sincerely,



YETINA Bruno



KELI Ferdinand



NDJAMBA Gilbert

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<sup>8</sup> The creator God among the Baka

<sup>9</sup> Lobeke National Park was formally gazetted by Decree No. 2001/107/CAB/PM/DU on 19 March, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> The two trophy-hunting zones are ZICGC 02 and ZICGC 03, both created by Order No. 1465/MINEF/DFAP/CEP/FB on 19 December, 2000

<sup>11</sup> Sources of support for Lobeke National Park include WWF and the Fondation Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS), itself financed by the German and French governments and UNESCO. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the TNS landscape, of which Lobeke is a part, as one of its priority landscapes for 2018, and USAID has also designated it as one of its priority areas.

BAKO Paul

MOBUKA Nestor

GAMBILI Thérèse

KABAHO Ernest

NOLI Madeleine

SEKINE Sylvie

SOUKOUTE Lambert

NDONDI Paulette

ALAMBA Jean-Pierre

SAPA Martin

INA Marie

GBEOKA Pascaline

BONGOU Martin

MOBOKA Emilienne

WEBO Nicaise

SAPA Emmanuel

DEKOSE Madeleine

KITO Martin

TAWA Apollinaire

KOLEKE Octavie

BENDE Alphonse

YOMBO Lazare

SONGO Clarice

ANDAKA Suzanne

MOMBI Thomas

GBANDO Alfred

Libongo  
Salapoumbe Arrondissement  
Boumba-et-Ngoko Department  
East Region  
Cameroon

1 June 2018

Dear Special Rapporteur,

We the Baka of Libongo are suffering terribly because of the safari-hunting company.<sup>12</sup> Even our forest in Lobeke has been stolen for the national park.<sup>13</sup> If they find us in the forest, they abuse us, they point their guns at us, they make us kneel down, they beat us.

Then they burn our camps, our clothes and take our cooking pots and machetes. All of our power is gone.

Now we are afraid to go into the forest. We don't go anymore. We are like thieves in our own forest. Women can't go dam fishing. Even honey, we no longer climb to gather that. We don't dig for yams anymore. We don't have anything to give our children to eat. How are we going to live? We have become the mud that other people trample on.

We the Baka were guarding this forest before the safari-hunting company arrived, since the time of our ancestors. We're told that the government must get our consent before selling our forest, and that companies need to make sure that happens, but they haven't done that. We ask you to come here to help us and make sure the law is respected.

Yours sincerely,



S.M. NJOUBE Théodore



MEWUNGA Damas



BIELO Arnaud

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<sup>12</sup> This refers the France-based trophy-hunting operation known as Faro West Lobeke. It uses two trophy-hunting zones: ZIC 29 and ZIC 30, both created by Order No. 1466/MINEF/DFAP/CEP/FB on 19 December, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Lobeke National Park was formally gazetted by Decree No. 2001/107/CAB/PM/DU on 19 March, 2001. Sources of support for Lobeke include WWF and the Fondation Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS), itself financed by the German and French governments and UNESCO. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the TNS landscape, of which Lobeke is a part, as one of its priority landscapes for 2018, and USAID has also designated it as one of its priority areas.

WESSAMO Pierre

NGAMO Angèle

ASSOMO Elise

MOKONDJO Etienne

AKO Sylvie

MOMITI Pauline

YAMBA Roger

NA Milène

NDANGWA Chantal

NGANGUE Yannick

DJANGUE Micheline

IKPA Nadège

BOSSANGO Victor

IMOLI Hélène

Yobe  
Sangha-Mambere Prefecture  
Bayanga Sub-Prefecture  
Central African Republic

5 June 2018

Dear Special Rapporteur,

We the Bayaka of Yobe are suffering a lot because of the project.<sup>14</sup> We have lost a lot of our forest to the park and even outside the park the ecoguards abuse us, steal from us, beat us, they order us to get out of our forest even though we are the guardians of the forest here.

Two of our brothers were badly beaten a few months ago. One ecoguard sliced his leg open. One of mothers was coming back to the village and the ecoguards stole her honey and her shrimps. Things like this have happened too many times to count.

We're afraid to go far in the forest and our health is plummeting. How can we feed our children?

We are told that they need seek our consent for these projects but that has never happened. Why are they giving money to these people who are tormenting us rather than working with us?

We ask all those who fund the project to come here and listen to all our problems and seek our consent.<sup>15</sup> Otherwise how will we survive?

Yours sincerely,



ELOBA Germaine



JOGBA Saga



PINDO Dieudonné

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<sup>14</sup> The Dzanga-Sangha Protected Area Complex, which is composed of the Dzanga-Ndoki National Park and the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve. The Bayaka are formally denied their right to enter Dzanga-Ndoki National Park (created by Law No. 90.017 on 29 December, 1990). They are formally authorized to hunt and gather in the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve (created by Law No. 90.017 on 29 December, 1990), but even here the abuse they suffer at the hands of wildlife guards has been documented for several years. Both incidents described in the letter reportedly took place inside the reserve.

<sup>15</sup> Sources of support for Lobeke include WWF and the Fondation Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS), itself financed by the German and French governments and UNESCO. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the TNS landscape, of which Lobeke is a part, as one of its priority landscapes for 2018, and USAID has also designated it as one of its priority areas.

MISHEKE Martine

MODANGA André

KONE Mathieu

LOPE Brigitte

JETE Vincent

MONDA Daguère

BOTA Mélanie



*The wound of one of the two victims mentioned in the letter; photo taken in Yobe on 3 June 2018*

Mossapoula  
Sangha-Mambere Prefecture  
Bayanga Sub-Prefecture  
Central African Republic

6 June 2018

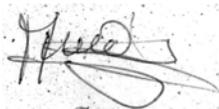
Dear Special Rapporteur,

We the Bayaka of Mossapoula get our health from the forest. Our health isn't good any more. Our most nutritious food is in the forest. We Bayaka are born in the forest; we're suffering here in the village. If the project carries on like this,<sup>16</sup> it would be a catastrophe and many of us will die of hunger.<sup>17</sup>

The ecoguards have beaten us, burned our forest camps and stolen our spears, our cooking pots and our hunting nets. Even in the small zone outside the park that they have left us with, the ecoguards threaten us and tell us to get out. But we are the guardians of the forest here, the eyes of the forest. We would like to keep protecting it but instead of that they abuse us.

We ask all funders to respect international law and come here, see the reality, do some monitoring and seek our consent before it continues its funding.<sup>18</sup>

Yours sincerely,



MOANDJA Richard  
Vice-President, Union des  
Communautés Bayaka (UCB)



PEYA Martin



MBAITI BETI Vincent

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<sup>16</sup> The Dzanga-Sangha Protected Area Complex, which is composed of the Dzanga-Ndoki National Park and the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve. The Bayaka are formally denied their right to enter Dzanga-Ndoki National Park (created by Law No. 90.017 on 29 December, 1990). They are formally authorized to hunt and gather in the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve (created by Law No. 90.017 on 29 December, 1990), but even here the abuse they suffer at the hands of wildlife guards has been documented for several years.

<sup>17</sup> Deteriorating health outcomes have been confirmed by medical research and partly attributed to the impact of the conservation project, see e.g. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/542-from-abundance-to-acute-marginality-farmsarms-and-forests-in-the-central-african-republic-1988-2014>

<sup>18</sup> Sources of support for Lobeke include WWF and the Fondation Tri-National de la Sangha (FTNS), itself financed by the German and French governments and UNESCO. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the TNS landscape, of which Lobeke is a part, as one of its priority landscapes for 2018, and USAID has also designated it as one of its priority areas.

S.M. MBANGO MABELE Gabriel  
Bayaka President of Mossapoula

MBOUSSA Mathieu

MENGONGA Donatien

MATOPI Ferdinand

MOLOUMBE Jacques

KANO Michel

BOKO Paul

NDINGO Gilbert