



25 June 2019

Maniema Union 2 and Forest Governance Reforms in DRC

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to you concerning the widespread illegal logging by Maniema Union 2 in DRC and to ask that you take appropriate measures to ensure that this cannot be tolerated in your respective forestry programmes.

As you will know, in June 2018 the Maniema Union 2 acquired a number of logging concessions in contravention of DRC's longstanding moratorium – [an issue that led to the initial suspension of CAFI funding](#).

Rather than returning these concessions to the state, the family of General Gabriel Amisi Kumba, currently under US and EC sanctions for human rights abuses, then swiftly sold them and the company onto Lei Hua Zhang, a Chinese timber magnate.

Since this time, local CSOs in Equateur province have reported it has been engaged in [widespread and egregious illegal logging both inside and outside of its concessions](#).

Despite incontrovertible evidence of industrial-scale illegal logging, [corroborated by local government officials](#), a decision was made by the court in Mbandaka essentially exonerating the company and allowing it continue its operations (see civil society declaration, [here](#)).

The impunity of Maniema Union 2 and the deteriorating rule of law in forest areas in general is all the more notable given the continuing absence of an Environment Minister - now more than four months since the new government was formed.

We believe that advancing with major forest reform programmes in this climate without taking the government to task on this will be seen as a green light for those to continue such flagrant disregard for the law.

As the international community looks to reset relations with the new DRC administration it is imperative that you make it clear from the outset that this will not be tolerated, including via the following measures:

- Ensure that appropriate legal action is taken against the company;
- An inquiry is held into the circumstances under which the company was acquitted, the results of which should be made public and the appropriate actions taken;

- Make the return of the illegal concessions to the state a precondition of any further funding through the CAFI, FCPF and FIP programmes.
- Make the instalment of a new Environment Minister and a written commitment from him/her on respecting the moratorium and cancelling all illegal concessions precedent on any further funding.

We thank you for taking the time to consider this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Counsell', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Simon Counsell

Executive Director

Rainforest Foundation UK