



To:

Delegation of the EU to Cameroon,  
British High Commission,  
German, French, U.S. Embassy

CC: The Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon, Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development.

22 July 2022

**Subject: Commitment for forest protection and halt of road building and logging in Ebo Forest**

Dear Ambassadors and High Commissioner to Cameroon,

We are writing to express urgent concern about the future of the Ebo forest and the surrounding villages. The Prime Minister halted the classification of two Forest Management Units by Decree on 6 August 2020 in the highly valuable Ebo forest. Less than two years later the same forest is again under threat. This time by road building. Again we stand united to urge you to prevent the destruction of Ebo Forest and commit to support an inclusive land-use planning process that would chart a sustainable development pathway for affected communities.

The road building is detrimental on the following grounds:

**1. No formal consultation process has been undertaken with communities to determine the most efficient trajectory.**

Although several villages or their leaders gave consent, there are multiple communities and their leaders that do not want the road in the current trajectory.

**2. The road building goes against the Prime Minister Decree from 6 August 2020**

The Decree halted the conversion of the forest into Forest Management Units (FMU). The road is situated right in the middle of the forest and does not follow existing roads. Clearly this road is meant to open up the Ebo forest for future logging activities rather than 'disenclave' the area as purported. (See Annex I)

**3. Illegal logging**

Local sources report about extensive illegal logging near the road building site and in the FMU 07 002. This makes the road building more harmful for biodiversity and robs people of the precious natural resource they have protected for their development and future generations. There is no clarity if the FMU 07 002 has an approved management plan.

**4. The road does not provide inclusive development**

Communities want to develop and roads are important to have access to markets, education and health care. The current road trajectory is badly planned and will not deliver for communities. It goes right through the Ebo forest, it does not connect to any existing villages, and thus has no impact on local economic development. Scientific evidence abounds on the deforestation impact of badly planned roads. Communities stand to lose a precious natural resource that provides for their livelihoods.

**5. The road project is likely illegal**

Environmental Impact Assessments and authorisations from the relevant public administrations seem to be lacking. Thereby due process was not followed. We are concerned by the precedent that this project creates

at a time when Cameroon is committed to more efficiently manage its forests for the well-being of its people and for the planet.

After the Prime Minister Decree from August 2020, unfortunately not much was done to provide the Ebo forest villages with alternative development pathways. We propose you urgently address the need for sustainable development for the communities and promote investigations into the legality of the road project. Communities will be better supported if the road is built based on their legitimate development needs, adheres to the quest for inclusive forest governance and the international commitments on climate, human rights and biodiversity.

You have committed to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, promote inclusive forest governance and protect biodiversity, as laid down in the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity and several unique forest pledges. In our view, these commitments should propel you into action against the destruction and for protection of Ebo forest. If that iconic and highly valuable forest is lost, what forest would remain safe from being clearcut or degraded?

We ask you to act immediately and publicly commit to:

1. Discuss concerns about Ebo forest with your counterparts in Cameroon and demand an independent investigation of the legality of the road construction operation and the logging in FMU 07 002. This could include funding for a joint control mission.
2. Publicly commit finance – around 2 to 3 Million Euros – and work with rightsholders and other stakeholders to develop inclusive projects for alternative road building that serves existing villages and abandoned villages as well as other projects for sustainable development for Ebo forest communities. Make sure that extractive activities that prejudice the outcome of this participatory process are halted. Include technical and legal support to communities and technical studies to inform the land-use options and decision making.

This commitment could trigger authorities to suspend and rethink the Ebo road project. If you wait too long the current road building will destroy the core areas of the Ebo forest in the next weeks and months. Forest areas which are crucial for the livelihoods of thousands of people, a healthy climate and host gorilla habitat and other endangered species. You can still make a difference for Cameroonian people and forests. To meet your zero-deforestation, human rights, climate, development and biodiversity goals and to promote the rule of law and inclusive forest governance we urge you to ensure the current road project and logging is investigated and halted and to publicly commit to long-term and inclusive solutions for the villages near Ebo forest.

We remain available for further discussions. And to engage with the communities and civil society to ensure that an inclusive land-use planning process is initiated.

Yours Faithfully,

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With: Green Development Advocates, Rainforest Foundation UK, Fern, AJESH, Foder and Greenpeace Africa.

# ANNEX I: Road trajectory and Ebo forest

