



Mr J McIntire  
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16<sup>th</sup> December 2005

Dear Mr. McIntire (cc. members of the World Bank External Advisory Group on forests)

Thank you for your message.

We are considering your offer of a public debate on the role of the World Bank in DRC's forest sector. Given the evident level of misunderstanding displayed by yourself and other Bank colleagues in recent correspondence, we would suggest that the most constructive way forward would be to have an open seminar discussion on the issues raised, and that this should take place in Washington DC so as to allow for full participation of all the relevant Bank staff. We would suggest that an appropriate time would be at the Bank's Spring meetings, 2006.

However, as I am sure you can appreciate, such a debate would only have any utility if a/ it were conducted in a spirit of honesty and integrity and b/ there were a clear understanding that there would be meaningful follow-up to the discussion.

With these points in mind, we believe a good starting point would be that you answer the many questions that remain outstanding from previous correspondence (to some of which we have been awaiting responses for more than 3 years). Specifically:

1. What is the developmental rationale for what the Bank is planning in terms of development of DRC's forest sector? Specifically, where is the evidence that this will contribute in any way to achievement of any of the Millennium Development Goals? How do you believe that this is going to be of benefit to the many millions of people living in Congo's forests and depending on it for their survival? What are the costs of this programme likely to be, in terms of social and environmental impact?
2. What evidence can you produce that the Bank staff have taken due account of the findings of the UN Security Council Expert Panel, or the UN SC Resolution 1457, or the work of other agencies, such as the ARD report for USAID, which described quite clearly the parlous and dangerous state of natural resources management in DRC?
3. Have your colleagues informed you that there has already been a moratorium on new logging concessions in existence since May 2002, and that, despite this moratorium, an area of nearly 15 million hectares has been allocated illegally by the Minister concerned, with whom the Bank continues to work? What evidence does the Bank have to believe that the current moratorium will be any more effective?
4. Have your staff reported to you the well-known dismal failure of

the 40% retrocession of forestry taxes to local communities in other, relatively 'better governed' countries such as Cameroon, and what do you believe the implications of this will be for the implementation of similar taxes in DRC?

5. Have your staff reported to you their failure so far to raise area forestry taxes in DRC above a risible level of \$0.20 per hectare, and what do you believe the implications of this will be for projected levels of income to the DRC treasury from the forest sector?

6. Have your staff reported to you that, so far, none of the legal decrees concerning local peoples rights, community forests, access to subsistence forest resources etc have yet been developed, and what do you consider the implications of this to be for the planned allocation of "at least 10 new forest concessions", as is required in the EESRSP Financing Agreement?

7. Why have none of the relevant Bank safeguard policies been applied (or, in some cases, even triggered) in relation to ANY of the Bank's work in DRC's forest sector?

8. Why has the Bank's work in DRC's forest sector totally ignored the recommendations of the Bank's work in relation to post-conflict situations?

9. Where is the Bank's analysis of the possible alternative development scenarios for DRC's forests, instead of the model that has been shown to be so disastrous elsewhere?

Secondly, we would insist that you inform us as to precisely what meaningful actions have been taken by the Bank following the debates and discussions that have already taken place on this matter, namely, with Mr. Wolfensohn on 8th July 2004, and with Mr. Wolfowitz on September 25th, 2005.

A further pre-condition for such a debate would be that it is open to the public and other members of staff of the Bank, as well as to the media, and would be fully recorded by us on video.

Should you agree to these conditions, and provide substantive answers to the above questions, we would be happy to begin organizing an appropriate event, including the facilitation of Congolese civil society participation.

Yours sincerely

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