

Ms Obiagele Ezekwesili,
Vice President for Africa,
The World Bank

26th October 2007

By email

Dear Ms Ezekwesili,

We are writing to alert you to a recent incident in Kinshasa which we believe reflects the ongoing failure of Bank staff to meaningfully and frankly engage the local population in decision-making on forest sector interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This latest incident underscores concerns about the actions of Bank staff on mission or based in the Congo, and we would be grateful if you could look into the situation and take appropriate action. With the Inspection Panel report on DRC due to be reviewed by the Board within the next few weeks, it seems to us to be an extremely poor time for Bank staff to be behaving inappropriately.

The situation was as follows:

At 19.00 on October 23rd 2007, Joseph Bobia, Adrien Sinafasi, Willy Loyombo, Roger Muchuba, Pierre Bonkono and Colette Mikila had a meeting with Professor Kankonde, Laurent Debroux and Marjory-Anne Bromhead of the World Bank. The meeting was held at the request of Adrien Sinafasi, who had just returned from the Bank Annual Meeting in Washington DC. Mr Sinafasi made it clear before the meeting began that it was to be informal and off the record.

The stated objectives of the delegation at this informal meeting were to discuss: a) feedback from the trip to Washington and b) the process of conversion of logging titles.

Once the meeting began, Ms Bromhead presented the visitors with a document, a “Plan d’Actions” and suggested that they should discuss it. The group refused to discuss the document, pointing out that this was the first time they had seen it, that they required time to read and digest the contents and that this meeting was not the appropriate forum for such a discussion.

During the meeting, the participants then noticed that, despite agreement at the start that this was an informal, off the record meeting, they were being filmed with a Bank video camera.

On noticing that they were being filmed without permission, the group then called a halt to the discussions and announced that they would leave the meeting.

We have attached the letter that the participants at the meeting sent to the Bank staff concerned the very next day.

We are profoundly disappointed at the Bank’s behaviour in this instance for the following reasons:

- The Bank failed to respect prior agreement that the meeting be off the record and filmed the participants without their permission. The participants themselves have conveyed concern about this and have expressly stated that this record cannot be used as “evidence” of any type of “consultation”.
- We are aware that the Bank Management has been granted an extension in preparing a response to the Inspection Panel report. We share the concerns of the participants at the meeting in Kinshasa that the Bank may choose to present said meeting as “consultation” on the Bank response. We would point out that all meetings between the Bank and the requestors to date on this issue have been held at the initiative of the requestors, not the Bank. Also, both in Washington DC and previously in Kinshasa, in meetings between Bank directors and staff and the requestors of the Panel inspection, the Bank has repeatedly refused to discuss the Panel report. To then present the requestors with a document without prior warning or time for reflection and without express clarification that this is some form of consultation, gives a strong impression that the Bank is not acting in good faith.
- Our concern is that any “consultation” in this short extension period, with little notice, will not be adequate and will not fulfil the recommendations made in the Panel report about appropriate methodologies for such consultations. Having had four years in which to carry out appropriate consultations, a series of rushed meetings by Bank staff at the last moment would not be a satisfactory replacement for a proper process.

Given this context, we would suggest that:

- The staff concerned in this meeting are held to account for filming without permission and provide an explanation for their intent in so doing.
- The staff responsible for the work under scrutiny in the Panel report are held to account for their actions and their failure to respect the Bank’s own policies.
- The Bank shows its good faith by submitting and disclosing both the report and its response, and engaging in open and meaningful debate about remedial actions and future interventions, *before initiating any other actions concerning indigenous peoples in the DRC*. When such actions are undertaken, the Bank should pay close attention to the findings of the report, particularly those concerning consultation with indigenous communities and free, prior and informed consent.

Yours sincerely,



Lars Løvold, Director, Rainforest Foundation Norway



Simon Counsell, Director, Rainforest Foundation UK

Cc	Kathy Sierra	Vice President, Sustainable Development
	Gino Alzetta	Executive Director Belgium
	Herman Wijffels	Executive Director Netherlands
	Svein Aass	Executive Director Norway
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