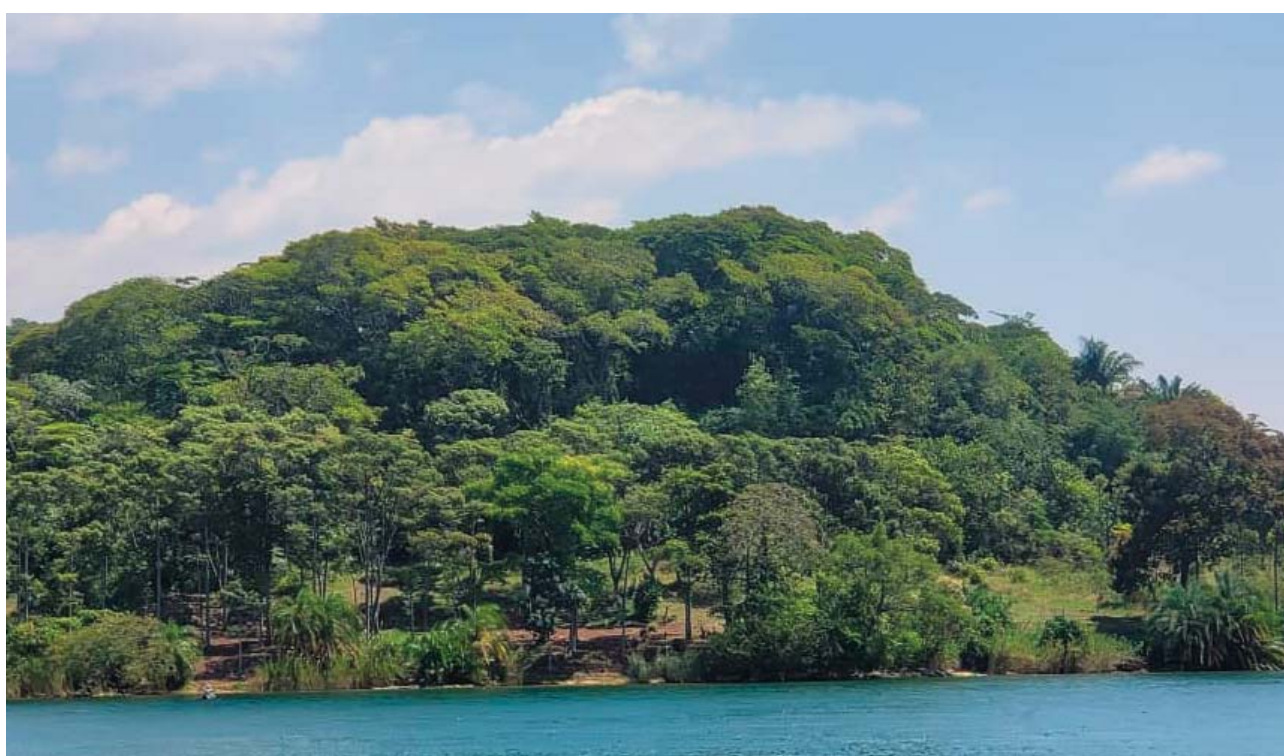

The auctioning of oil and gas blocks in the Democratic Republic of Congo: an ecological, socio-economic and cultural disaster in the making

Declaration by environmental rights defenders, indigenous pygmy peoples and local communities.



In the context of the 30 oil and gas blocks auction, and the wider promotion of extractive activities in the DRC, and in light of the commitments made since the COP21 in Paris to promote renewable energies, we Congolese civil society organizations, youth movements and indigenous pygmy peoples, are united behind the conviction that preserving the environment is a moral duty and a responsibility towards future generations. We are also convinced that the real fight against poverty and sustainable economic development - the highest priorities for our country - are intimately linked to the conservation of our ecosystems. These objectives also depend on the transparent governance of natural resources and respect for the rule of law. In this sense, the participation and rights of local communities and indigenous pygmy peoples who have traditionally protected the tropical forests of the DRC, are particularly important.



In this context, and on the eve of the Conference of the Parties on climate change, COP28, we jointly express our opposition to the selling of oil and gas blocks in the DRC, for the following reasons:

- To date, the bidding process for the 27 oil and 3 gas blocks has been marked by a number of illegalities and inconsistencies on the legal and regulatory framework, as well as concerns about compliance with standards and the expertise of the companies associated with the blocks¹.
- Local communities and indigenous pygmy populations were not previously informed or consulted about this process, which would irreversibly transform their living spaces, and some have begun to express their strong opposition to exploitation in their territories².
- This exploitation will not be the miracle solution to the Congolese economic problem. In fact, unlike many countries whose only wealth is oil, the DRC has a diversity of resources capable of boosting its development while ensuring sustainability.
- The proposed blocks threaten the destruction of forest ecosystems, including protected areas, peatlands and areas of high conservation value.

¹ For more details, see the position paper of the environmental civil society (RENOI) on the call for tenders for the allocation of hydrocarbon rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo in September 2022.

² See the Declaration of indignation by the UPADIS-Batwa organisation of the Idjwi territory of October 2023

- The ecological, socio-economic and cultural disruptions associated with oil exploitation will generate irreversible losses for the peoples affected.
- Indeed, as the ongoing oil exploitation in the Muanda territory in Kongo Central province³, and in several countries around the world illustrates, this activity is having catastrophic impacts on ecosystems, traditional livelihoods, waterways and human health.
- As the country has already demonstrated on many occasions, the exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones, as in the case of the Eastern provinces of the DRC, often exacerbates these conflicts and encourages criminality.
- This initiative runs absolutely counter to global and national climate objectives, and could significantly increase carbon emissions, turning the DRC's image as a "solution country" into an empty shell.

For these reasons, we call on the Congolese government to withdraw the all oil and gas blocks up for auction (not just those located in protected areas) and we urge it to pursue a more equitable and sustainable development path, based on a number of fundamental priorities:

- A fair energy transition favoring renewable energies (micro and mini dams, solar, geothermal, wind, photovoltaic and biomass).
- The development of other economic alternatives, such as sustainable agriculture and fishing.
- The realization of the collective land rights of local and indigenous peoples as a prerequisite for forest protection and equitable economic growth.
- Defending the right to prior consultation and participation of local communities and indigenous peoples in decision-making concerning any planned development in their territories, and secure respect for the law on the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous pygmy people of 2022.
- Transparency in the management of land and natural resources, enabling civil society to monitor the consistency and legality of the various initiatives.
- Equality in the sharing of the benefits of economic growth, with a strong emphasis on the fight against poverty and the inclusion of traditionally disadvantaged groups.

In this context, we call on international donors and investors to support these efforts, particularly by promoting a new global financing architecture for forests, including through a global carbon tax, redirection of subsidies, fair payments for ecosystem services and debt relief.

As a civil society, youth movement and indigenous pygmy peoples, we will remain constructive and committed to defending rights, the environment and contribute to:

- Helping to develop policies and programmes that reduce the country's dependence on hydrocarbons and fossil fuels.
- Providing information and data on the problems facing society and helping to develop fair and effective solutions.
- Disseminating reliable and scientific information on the environmental and social impacts of hydrocarbon exploitation.

Together, we have a right to a healthy and flourishing environment and a responsibility to leave a viable planet for future generations. Together, we also have a responsibility to those who have historically helped to protect our lands and resources, and who are currently marginalized in decision-making processes. We call on the Congolese government and the international community gathered at COP28 to support this call to action.

³ <https://congomines.org/reports/2275-impacts-de-perenco-rep-sur-le-cadre-de-vie-des-communautes-de-muanda-en-rdc>



Let's leave the Democratic Republic of Congo's oil in the ground.

Kinshasa and Goma, 28 November 2023



Signed by:

- 1) Action pour la Biodiversité Environnement et Développement durable (ABED)
- 2) Actions pour la Promotion et Protection des Peuples et Espèces Menacés en RDC (APEM)
- 3) AFRICAPACITY RDC
- 4) Alertes Congolaises pour l'Environnement et les Droits Humains (ACEDH)
- 5) Bureau de Veille et de Gouvernance des Ressources Naturelles (BVGRN)
- 6) Cadre d'Acteurs et d'Actions pour le Développement Durable (CAADD)
- 7) Cadre de Concertation sur les Ressources Naturelles Ituri (CdC/RN Ituri)
- 8) Centre d'Éducation pour la Protection de l'Environnement et Développement Durable (CEPED)
- 9) Coalition des Organisation de la Société Civile pour le suivi des réformes et de l'Action Publique (CORAP)
- 10) Dynamique de groupes des Peuples Autochtones (DGPA)
- 11) Extinction Rébellion RDC (XR-RDC)
- 12) Fédération des Comités des Pêcheurs Individuels du Lac Edouard (FECOPEILE)
- 13) Groupe de Réflexions et d'Actions pour le Développement Intégral (GRADI)
- 14) Initiative pour le Développement Local (IDEL)
- 15) Innovation pour le Développement et la Protection de l'Environnement (IDPE)
- 16) Mouvement des Jeunes en Actions pour le Changement en RDC (MOJAC-RDC)
- 17) Mouvement des Jeunes pour la Protection de l'Environnement (MJPE)
- 18) Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Écosystèmes Forestiers (Réseau CREF)
- 19) Ressources Naturelles et Développement (RENAD)
- 20) Save My World (SMW)
- 21) Union des Peuples Autochtones /Batwa pour le Développement et l'Insertion Socio-économique (UPADIS-Batwa)
- 22) Union pour l'Émancipation de la Femme Autochtone (UEFA-RDC)
- 23) Union pour le Développement de Minorités EKONDA (UDME)

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