

LIBREVILLE, October 24 (Infosplusgabon) - Industrial logging in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) may severely disturb rainfall patterns across sub-Saharan Africa and bring about more extreme weather, including intense droughts and flash floods. In a letter sent today to the African Union, Greenpeace Africa is calling for an urgent discussion of the consequences that plans made in Kinshasa to lift its moratorium on logging would have for Congolese and African people in general.

Renewed industrial logging in the DRC poses a risk “to Indigenous People, local communities and biodiversity, as well as the whole of sub-Saharan Africa,” writes Greenpeace Africa’s Programme Director, Melita Steele, to the Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, H.E. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko,

Africa’s climate is fundamentally linked to the state of Central Africa’s forests and massive logging can impact the quantity of rainfall throughout the region. The Congo Basin forest is estimated to contribute more than half of the annual precipitation in Sub-Saharan Africa, already facing a plethora of droughts and extreme heat waves.

Last July, Congolese Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment, Ève Bazaiba, decided to lift the moratorium on new logging concessions, which has been in place since 2002. The decision was approved on 9 July by the eleventh Council of Ministers, presided by Président Félix Tshisekedi. An implementation decree is believed to be imminent.

“Deciding on whether to protect or destroy the rainforest may be within the DRC’s sovereignty, but the consequences of its actions will be felt everywhere from Nairobi to Dakar, from Pretoria to Abjua,” writes Steele on behalf of Greenpeace Africa.

Beyond direct implications for Congolese and other African people, the decision to lift the moratorium is contradicting commitments made by the President of the Republic, Felix Tshisekedi, at President Joe Biden’s Leaders Summit on Climate, to protect the forest and increase forest cover by 8%. It also undermines the African Union’s 2063 Agenda and its Sustainable Forest Management Framework (SFMF), promising that “Africa will have zero deforestation and forest degradation and its forests will be protected, sustainably managed and restored through collaborative, cross-sectoral and transformative efforts to ensure the prosperity, food security and resilience of its people.”

Finally, this jeopardizes Africa’s credibility in climate talks in COP26, set to begin in Glasgow in ten days, and the appeal from rich nations to support vulnerable nations annually with USD 100 billion to face the climate crisis.

Serge Ngwato, Greenpeace Africa forest campaigner in Kinshasa: “We cannot expect Africa’s claim for climate funds to be taken seriously, when our own actions make the climate crisis worse. Renewing industrial logging would pose additional risk both to us Congolese and to our neighbours – the moratorium must be extended, while management rights over the forest must be granted to its Indigenous and local communities.”

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