global witness

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Global Witness investigation leads to UK arrest over carbon deal in Liberia

Update: Liberian government launches investigation

Officers from the City of London Police's Overseas Anti-Corruption Unit (OACU) have arrested the CEO of UK-based Carbon Harvesting Corporation, Mike Foster, following an investigation by Global Witness into a deal involving the trade of carbon credits from a proposed carbon concession in Liberia.

Over the last two years Global Witness has been examining the financial, social and environmental risks involved in the proposed deal. In meetings with Global Witness Foster made references to irregular payments made to a Liberian government official and a politician via a middleman. Global Witness then felt obliged to notify the police as reported in the Financial Times on Friday 4th June.

In 2007, Carbon Harvesting Corporation (CHC) approached the Government of Liberia to negotiate the allocation of a 400,000 hectare forest carbon concession - a fifth of Liberia's rainforest- in order to sell carbon credits to clients who want to offset their own carbon emissions. Global Witness raised serious concerns about the deal with the company, including their relative inexperience and the lack of consultation, effective safeguards or monitoring mechanisms.

The organisation was concerned by a potential financial loss of over US$2 billion to the Liberian government and highlighted the lack of fundamental information regarding the viability of the project.

Global Witness's Amy Barry said "As a post-conflict country where natural resources played a significant role in fuelling the war, Liberia now faces the challenge of managing its forests and other resources in a way that benefits the country's citizens and prolongs peace. Successfully overcoming decades of corruption and breaking entrenched patterns of resource mismanagement will require sustained political will, civil society engagement, and support from donors and other stakeholders."

Contact:

Amy Barry +44 (0) 7980 664397, +44 (0)207 492 5858

Mike Davis +44 (0) 207 492 5896, +44 (0)7872 600860

Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses