



**Lead Investigator
SOCO International Account
Clifford Chance
London**

Goma, July 29th2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write to you as the representatives of several civil society groups based in North Kivu, Eastern DRC. We represent the communities who have been directly affected by the operations of Soco International and its associates in and around UNESCO World Heritage Site, Virunga National Park.

Several of our [peers have spoken openly about their experiences of your client's operations](#)¹ - some of which amount to serious allegations of bribery, corruption and human rights abuse, and consequently a breach of the UK Bribery Act 2010.

The scope of these allegations have been readily accessible and in the public domain for a considerable amount of time, beginning with our own submissions to an [OECD](#) complaint against your client and followed by subsequent evidence contained in the Academy® nominated documentary [Virunga](#), as well as reports by [Human Rights Watch](#), [Global Witness](#), [The Telegraph](#) and [BBC News](#).

Our allegations continue to be taken seriously throughout the national and international community and we continue to actively advocate for the respect and the reparation of human rights violations committed during SOCO's activities in Block V. We have support from some of the most prestigious organizations in the world;

- by the national DRC government and its decision to launch an investigation into this issue,
- by international NGOs including Human Right's Watch and Global Witness,
- multinational companies including The Church of England Ethical Investment Fund and Investec Management SA,

¹<https://enanga.org/testimonies/environmental-civil-society-north-kivu-satisfied-divestment-church-england-company-soco/> / <https://enanga.org/testimonies/press-release-north-kivu-civil-society-on-soco-internationals-withdrawal-from-virunga-national-park/>

- government authorities, including the British government - [the Foreign Commonwealth Office](#), the All Party Parliamentary Group for African Great Lakes Region, and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Anti-Corruption,
- as well as the Belgian, German, American and European parliaments.

Unfortunately the only official investigation in the OECD was dropped without our knowledge by the WWF in negotiation with Soco International and to date there has been in our mind, no independent investigation into the allegations against Soco. You can imagine our satisfaction when Soco itself announced that they had engaged you, a world class law firm with an impeccable reputation to investigate these claims fully.

Our hope [turned to surprise](#)² that no terms of reference for your investigation were ever published, no approaches to any stakeholders including us were ever made nor were any findings ever published.

It is our humble opinion then that this “enquiry” cannot be called an independent investigation nor can it be called objective where there has been no effort to speak with the local civil society or those who experienced Soco’s operations first hand, here in eastern Congo. Therefore we reiterate our statement of the 17th of June and urge you to take the allegations against the company SOCO seriously in order to protect local communities and save Virunga National Park.

Considering the level of concern from respectable and reputable entities worldwide including those in the UK, US, Belgian and Congolese state authorities; we would seek an explanation from you, Clifford Change as to how this lack of transparency sits in line with your standards.

We would also call on you to release your findings into the public domain.

Yours faithfully,

For organizations of civil society working for the promotion and protection of the environment and human rights in North Kivu.

1. Bantu LUKAMBO (IDPE), bantulukambo@gmail.com, +243 997704042
2. Eddy K. SIWAYITIRA (SOPR), eddysoprgraben@gmail.com, +243 994 02 94 12
3. Isaac M. WIKEREVOLO (Réseau CREF), isaac.wiker@reseaucref.org, +243852666534
4. Jules MBOKANI (CREDDHO), julmbokani@gmail.com, + 243 994000110
5. Gaston KASONIA (CREDDHO), gastonbinmuswagha@gmail.com, +243 994390161
6. Alphonse M. VALIVAMBENE (Réseau CREF), alphonse.valivambene@reseaucref.org, +243 99838 48 39
7. Josué KAMBASU KATSUVA MUKURA (FECOPEILE), copeile_lake@yahoo.fr, +243 994175988

²<https://enanga.org/testimonies/allegations-company-soco-taken-seriously-order-protect-communities-save-virunga-national-park/>