



AMICALE DES VILLAGES RIVERAINS
DE LA PLANTATION SOCAPALM EDEA
"LES RIVERAINS"
Membres de l'Association d'ONGS/CSA/SAAP
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Foder
Forêts et Développement Rural
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Press release

Bolloré case:

associations' victory in the Cameroonian palm oil case confirmed

Versailles, 9 June 2022 - **The legal battle initiated by the associations to force Bolloré to remedy the human rights violations denounced in the context of the activities of the Cameroonian subsidiary Socapalm is still ongoing. The appeal judge once again ruled in favour of the associations: one more step for the victims.**

In 2010, Sherpa had referred to the OECD's non-judicial mechanism (National Contact Point) regarding the activities of Socapalm - the Cameroonian palm plantation indirectly owned by SOCFIN, itself owned by Bolloré - concerning social, environmental and land issues affecting local communities and workers. At the end of the mediation before the NCP, Sherpa and Bolloré agreed on an action plan, under which Bolloré committed to exerting its influence to remedy these problems on and around the plantations.

As Bolloré finally announced that it would not implement the plan, it remained unimplemented. Sherpa and the organisations ReAct, GRAIN, FIAN-Belgium, Bread For All, SYNAPARCAM, FODER, SNJP, the Amicale des Riverains d'Edéa and the SATAM trade union then decided to take the multinational to court in 2019 in order to demand its forced execution.

[After a first victory in 2021](#), the judge again rejected the claims made by Bolloré on procedural grounds. The associations relied on the agreement and the NCP mediation, but the multinational argued that the judicial procedure violated the confidentiality principle of mediation. The associations recalled that a mediated agreement is not confidential when the objective is to obtain its forced implementation. The appeal judges again rejected the request for nullity made by Bolloré on this basis.

This decision is a further step towards the implementation of the action plan by Bolloré, and therefore towards the long-awaited improvement of the living conditions of the

affected communities. In addition to the years of negotiations before the NCP, through procedural arguments, Bolloré has been delaying for the past 3 years the substantive debates on its responsibility. Bolloré however managed to exclude from the legal action SATAM and Bread for All, on the grounds that they had not respected certain formal requirements.

Sandra Cossart, Sherpa's Executive Director, said: *"For years, Sherpa has denounced the lack of guarantees that characterise soft law and amicable redress mechanisms and has advocated the use of binding remedies to force companies to respect human rights. This decision is a step in the right direction: it preserves the possibility for victims to have recourse to the judge if an agreement resulting from a NCP mediation is not implemented by the company involved."*

For Emmanuel Elong, SYNAPARCAM: *"The respect of the commitments made by the Bolloré group during the negotiation of the action plan is essential for the improvement of the living conditions of the local communities and workers of Socapalm, who still need assistance"*.

For Rodrigue Ngonzo, of FODER: *"Respect for human rights and the environment is a non-negotiable obligation with which any company must comply. Bolloré must ensure that Socapalm's activities contribute to improving the living conditions of the local populations by maintaining a healthy environment, and not to degrading them as it has been observed in southern Cameroon"*.

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