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Greenpeace Report and letter to PEFC and PEFC Stakeholders 7th July

Dear Andy

Thank you for your letter concerning your report “How Sinar Mas is Pulping the Planet” and acknowledging that based on this, PEFC has lodged a formal complaint with SGS. I can confirm that I will also be forwarding your letter to SGS to become part of the complaints dossier.

Concerning the report we note the section entitled “Start the Solution” stipulates: purchases should only come from legal sources; protection of forests from conversions; obtaining free and informed consent of indigenous peoples; ensuring supply chain traceability and recommends the introduction of procurement policies which provide such safeguards. PEFC has already incorporated these safeguards into its standards and I believe Greenpeace could go even further and promote the sustainable forest management of all forest lands feeding into the supply chain, demonstrated by independent third party accredited certification schemes such as that provided by both PEFC and FSC. I note your acknowledgement that there is not a single hectare of PEFC certified forest in Indonesia. With regard to the rest of your findings, a formal investigation is now underway using your report as the basis of the evidence.

However, concerning the latter point, it is a matter of concern that Greenpeace appears to have had evidence since 2008 of wrongdoing but chose not to act upon it. PEFC has repeatedly asked Greenpeace in writing to submit the evidence that it has for thorough investigation. Your follow up letter contained even more information than was in the report. I therefore urge you to submit all the information Greenpeace holds, relevant to Sinar Mas forestry operations, to assist SGS in their investigation.

You will already be aware that PEFC has been in the process of revising its chain of custody standard for some time and that a review of the “non-controversial sources requirements” is included. Greenpeace’s concern about protecting Indonesian fauna and flora, local communities including indigenous people and hopefully also forestry workers living and working within those local communities is praiseworthy indeed.

I was therefore rather surprised that Greenpeace has chosen not to participate in the public consultation on this, nor indeed any of the other PEFC public consultations on improving forest certification standards worldwide. In any event, I can confirm that your request concerning a review of PEFC procedures is already being addressed.

In addition to this, as stated in my most recent letter to you (2nd July), the PEFC Council has the highest minimum threshold (70%) for labelled certified material of any and all global forest certification systems and we are exploring raising our threshold for certified content to 100%, which of course would make the notion of “controversial sources” meaningless for PEFC labelled products. All certification systems should strive to achieve this goal as any due diligence / controlled wood system for uncertified wood is by its very nature a risk management system, and cannot claim, nor should it give the misleading impression, that they are promoting sustainable forest management or are equivalent to forest certification.

Greenpeace has made serious allegations concerning wood flows being illegal, and the appropriate response must be to investigate such an accusation in a comprehensive and objective manner as ISO rules, by which we are bound, stipulate. This is why a formal complaint has been made by PEFC to the certification body in question, SGS South Africa, the results of which will determine what actions will be taken and, dependant on the outcome could result in a termination of the certificate.

Concerning your assertion that APP is misusing the PEFC name and claims, both you and I have already addressed this issue in previous correspondence and I was therefore surprised that the report and yesterday’s press release chose to publish the old statement on the APP update that had already been altered at our request in March, as you are no doubt aware.

I am travelling for the next couple of weeks but look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely Yours



Ben Gunneberg
PEFC Council Secretary General