
Cameroon: EU fosters rainforest destruction

International "aid for development" is a major cause of forest destruction in many countries. This is exemplified in the case of Cameroon by the European Union, which plans to give a 55 million ECU grant to the government for road projects in the Southern region of the country. Cameroon has not explained which roads are to be built or rehabilitated and no environmental impact assessment studies have been carried out for these projects.

This is not new, since in the past the EU has already funded such road projects. For example, the EU gave 600,000 ECU for the rehabilitation of the Abong Mbang road to Lomie in the Cameroon rainforests. As a result, illegal timber exploitation and poaching expanded rapidly, using the new roads as ways of access to the forest. The pygmy population is losing its life-supporting resources from the forest and its social organisation is uprooted. At the same time, poaching has provoked an immense damage to the populations of gorillas and chimpanzees that are typical of that zone of the globe.

European environmental NGOs are lobbying against the concession of such grant, considering that the new projected roads would pave the way for logging companies to move into unexploited areas. The concession of the grant will be discussed at the European Development Fund Committee in mid June. NGOs are inviting individuals and organizations in that continent to protest to their respective governments, and to request that the details of the road projects are discussed publicly, that full environmental impact assessments are made before the grant is approved, and that Cameroonese authorities exert effective control of poaching and illegal logging.

Sources: Rettet den Regenwald e. V. and The Rainforest Foundation UK