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Soco's exploration in Virunga violates OECD guidelines, WWF alleges

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WWF today has filed a complaint alleging that British oil company Soco International PLC has breached international corporate social responsibility standards. WWF contends that, in the course of Soco's oil exploration activities in and around Virunga National Park, the company has violated environmental and human rights provisions of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

TAKE ACTION NOW! TELL SOCO TO GET OUT OF VIRUNGA

"Soco's operations are putting Virunga's people, animals and habitats at risk. The only way for Soco to come into compliance with the OECD guidelines is for the company to end all exploration in Virunga for good," said Lasse Gustavsson, Executive Director of Conservation at WWF International. "We urge the company to stop its activities immediately."

Soco allegedly has used state security forces to intimidate opponents, and has failed to disclose during community consultations vital information about potential environmental and health impacts of its exploration. Further, the company's contract contains a clause effectively exempting it from future laws aimed at protecting human rights and the environment.

Soco's own impact assessment shows that oil exploration could cause pollution, damage habitats and bring poaching to this fragile ecosystem. It could also harm residents' health and damage the natural resources upon which 50,000 people depend.

Virunga National Park is the most biodiverse protected area in Africa and one of the continent's oldest World Heritage Sites. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee maintains that oil exploration is inconsistent with the World Heritage Convention, and has called for the cancellation of all Virunga oil permits.

"By nominating Virunga as a World Heritage Site, the DRC government made a legal commitment to the international community to conserve the park for future generations," WWF's OECD complaint says. By entering the park for oil exploration, Soco has breached OECD guidelines urging respect for national laws and international treaties, WWF contends.

Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Virunga National Park is located, is an active conflict zone. Both OECD and the UN recommend that companies operating in areas of weak governance take particular care to ensure that their operations do not compromise human rights. Soco has provided no evidence that it has undertaken proper human rights due diligence.

The OECD guidelines applies to all multinational enterprises operating



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WWF's OECD complaint against Soco

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in or from adhering countries. UK is a founding member of OECD, which was established by governments in 1961 to advance economic and social wellbeing worldwide. A WWF report found that Virunga National Park could be worth US\$1.1 billion per year if developed sustainably and could be the source of 45,000 permanent jobs for residents.

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Prakash Shrivastava · an hour ago

I totally disagree with what emptyend has been saying. Why a British Company company all the way from UK to loot the natural resources of a poor African country. The West needs oil but Congo needs forests, livelihood for its people, its endangered wildlife. West has no right to destroy all this for its insatiable demand for oil. Britain has ruled for centuries over Asian and African nations and looted them at their will. Even after making them independent it continues to loot them through multinational companies. The truth is that their economy has totally collapsed and now they are looking at the resources of the poor countries to sustain them.

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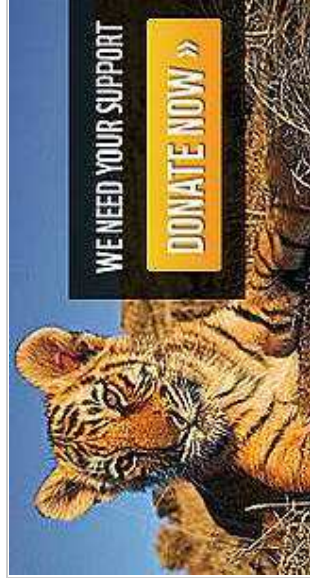
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