



## Statement

### **Congolese and international civil society organisations demand a ban on mining and hydrocarbon activities in the Conkouati-Douli National Park**

**Brazzaville – Brussels – Hamburg – London, 23 May 2025.**

On International Biodiversity Day and a few days before the opening of the First Global Congress of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities of Forest Basins, which will be held from 26 to 30 May in Brazzaville, the Government of the Republic of Congo (RoC) is sending a very negative signal to its partners by seeking to issue, once again, a hydrocarbon exploration permit within an ecological gem, the Conkouati-Douli National Park.

Congolese environmental civil society organisations and their allies express their deep concern and demand that this licence, which poses a threat to the environment, biodiversity and the rights of local and Indigenous communities, sending an alarming signal about the sincerity of the country's environmental commitments, not be granted.

On 18 April, during its Council of Ministers meeting<sup>1</sup>, the Government adopted three draft decrees granting permits for the exploitation and exploration of liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons. Among them is the 'Niambi' exploration permit, with a maximum duration of 12 years and covering an area of 1,295.6 square kilometres in the Conkouati-Douli park, which

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sgg.cg/ccm/compte-rendu-cmd-2025-04-18.pdf>



would be granted 85% to the company ORIENTAL Energy. This decree must now be signed by the President of the Republic.

In January 2024, several national organisations had already denounced<sup>2</sup> the award of a similar licence to the Chinese company China Oil Natural Gas Overseas Holding United in the same protected area. Rather than taking into account the legitimate concerns raised by national and international NGOs, the country has gone further by seeking to grant another permit in the heart of the park, where conservation activities are concentrated.

The granting of this permit would constitute a violation of the act establishing the Conkouati-Douli National Park, under Article 6 of Decree 99-13 bis of 14 August 1999, which clearly states that *'No authorisation for exploration or exploitation, whether mining, oil, forestry or agricultural, may be granted in the Conkouati-Douli National Park, except in ecodevelopment zones'*<sup>3</sup>.

Part of the Niambi permit overlaps with a terrestrial eco-development zone where exploration permits could be granted, subject to a prior environmental impact assessment, which, however, does not appear to have been carried out yet. Still, most of the permit is located in a 'fully protected terrestrial zone' where no exploration or exploitation activities may be carried out<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, if the exploration permit were to lead to an exploitation permit, this would contradict Congolese Law No. 37-2008 of 28 November 2008 on wildlife and protected areas, which prohibits any form of exploitation of the soil, subsoil and resources within a protected

<sup>2</sup> [Note-consolidée-sur-Conkouati-du-06062024-.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> This article has not been amended by Decree No. 2023-1806 of 30 December 2023 amending Articles 2, 3 and 4 of Decree No. 99-136 bis of 14 August 1999 establishing the Conkouati-Douli National Park.

<sup>4</sup> See the Park Management Plan (2009-2013), page 6: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/con219315.pdf>



area, except for those provided for in the act establishing the park or in the park's management plan<sup>5</sup>.

This initiative also contradicts the official statements of the President of the Republic of Congo, His Excellency Mr Denis Sassou Nguesso, and the international commitments of the Congolese government, in particular the agreement on forest preservation signed by the government at COP 28<sup>6</sup>.

***'International events organised by the authorities of the Republic of Congo on climate, the environment and the rights of local and indigenous communities lose all credibility when their actions systematically contradict the causes they claim to defend'*** – Trésor Nzila, Director of Centre d'Actions pour le Développement

The Conkouati-Douli Park is home to around 7,000 people spread across 30 villages, and the Niambi permit could also endanger several wildlife species such as lowland gorillas, hawksbill turtles, Atlantic humpback dolphins and other marine species. Their survival, such as the livelihoods of local communities, are linked to the preservation of this ecosystem.

However, local communities were not consulted to give their opinion on this permit, nor were they informed about the potential impacts of mining activities, which constitutes a violation of the right of local and indigenous communities to free, prior and informed consent under Congolese law<sup>7</sup>. This exclusion also violates the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

<sup>5</sup> Law No. 37-2008 on wildlife and protected areas - Article 12: 'The following are prohibited within national parks: All forms of exploitation of the soil, subsoil and natural resources, as well as all works and construction, except those provided for in the act of creation or in the park's development plan and those necessary for its development and supervision.'

<sup>6</sup> [La République du Congo, la France et l'Union Européenne annoncent un partenariat de 50 millions de dollars pour soutenir son ambition en faveur de la conservation de la biodiversité et du climat](#)

<sup>7</sup> Law No. 5-2011 of 25 February 2011 on the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, Article 3: 'The State shall ensure that indigenous peoples are consulted in an appropriate manner and shall establish culturally appropriate mechanisms for such consultation prior to any consideration, formulation or implementation of legislative or administrative measures, or development programmes and/or projects that may affect them directly or indirectly...'



Indigenous Peoples<sup>8</sup>, endorsed by the RoC, the Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>9</sup> and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>10</sup>, also ratified by the country.

In response to this project, we, national and international organisations, urge **the President of the Republic of Congo**, His Excellency Denis Sassou Nguesso, not to sign the decree granting the 'Niambi' hydrocarbon exploration permit in the national park.

Furthermore, we reiterate the request already expressed by a coalition of national organisations in January 2024 to withdraw or cancel any other permit related to the prospecting, exploration and exploitation of solid and liquid minerals in the park and its surrounding area. We also call for a formal ban on all mining and oil exploration and exploitation activities in this park.

Once again, we call on **international partners and donors** supporting conservation activities in the Republic of Congo to make their continued engagement conditional on the non-granting of further oil or mining exploration or exploitation permits in protected areas, and on the withdrawal or cancellation of any permits that have already been granted. Instead, the government and its international partners must redouble efforts to promote the rights of IPs and LCs, including through community forestry and implementation of the 2011 Indigenous Peoples law.

Finally, we urge all **participants in the Congress to be held in Brazzaville from 26 to 30 May**, and to **any institution or organisation** engaged in conservation and community rights, to write to the Congolese authorities, namely the President of the Republic of Congo and the Prime Minister, Head of Government, asking them not to sign the draft decree that will validate the granting of the 'Niambi' permit. This decision jeopardises one of the richest and most sensitive ecosystems in Congo, renowned for its exceptional biodiversity.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_F\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_F_web.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-fr.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>



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## How can you help?

We invite anyone who wishes to do so to :

- Send a **letter to the President of the Republic** directly via the website of the Presidency of the Republic or by post to:

B.P.: 2087 RP, Brazzaville Republic of Congo

Telephone: +242 06 444 2848

- Send your **letter to the Prime Minister** by email to [contact@primature.gouv.cg](mailto:contact@primature.gouv.cg) or directly on the [website of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo](http://www.primature.gouv.cg)
- **Take action on social media:**
  - Tweet to the accounts: **@MakossoAnatole** and **@PrimatureCongoB**
  - Share your messages on **Facebook**

Spread the word: every voice counts!