

## **SOCFIN press release**

It is with consternation that the Socfin Group has learned about the AFP news and the article in Le Monde concerning the activities of our Group in Cambodia.

For more than 120 years, the Socfin Group's main mission has been the management of rubber plantations, as well as other cultures, guided by the values of sustainability, responsibility and ethics. As such, the Group considers total respect for the local populations affected by its operations and their environment an absolute and unconditional priority.

Taking into account the various socio-economic and environmental implications, the problems around concessions and land occupation are very complex and cannot be discussed without a profound and responsible analysis.

The Socfin KCD project forms part of a development programme of the Mondolkiri Province in Cambodia. This programme is defined, guided and driven under the impulse, authority and control of the public authorities in Cambodia.

In this context, it is important to underline that the land where the plantations were developed belongs to the Cambodian State and on no account to the Socfin or Bolloré Group.

Consequently, the accusation of « expropriation » is per definition inept, since only the Cambodian state could most probably proceed with expropriation or eviction by application of national law.

The concession mentioned in the allegations is part of a group of concessions with various purposes: ecological, economic and social. The entire land is currently planted with various types of crops (rubber, maize, pepper, rice,...), allowing the Phnong population to integrate in modern multicultural society, offering them sustainable socio-economic perspectives.

The start of our project follows an appeal from the Cambodian State to develop a concession within the framework of a social and environmental impact assessment and after consultation of the populations involved in each village. On no account our Group, and thus indirectly the Cambodian authorities, envisaged to or envisages forcing the local populations to sell their land. Such hypotheses, besides being libelous, are fully in contrast with Cambodian law and the values which have guided our Group since its creation and systematically in its development.

Within the context defined by the local authorities, our Group received 846 requests for compensation, from 492 families. Of these, 819 requests were accepted and in total 1348 ha were compensated, and are involved in projects developed in total coordination with the local authorities and the populations concerned, either in the form of smallholder projects or in the form of financial compensations.

In certain cases, where the populations considered the project did not meet their expectations, the families decided to keep their parcels.

Furthermore, the Group firmly condemns the unjustified allegations concerning the sacred forests and burial places.

We would like to point out that within the framework of our activities and completely in line with our values, putting respect for religious beliefs and convictions at the core of our business, these areas of high conservation value have been the object of our utmost attention and are henceforth sustainably protected, and this in close collaboration with the Cambodian authorities.

Currently, only 70% of the concessions developed in collaboration with the Cambodian authorities consist of rubber plantations. The remaining 30% comprise an ecological zone, sacred forest and the land belonging to the populations who chose not to participate in the project.

The socio-economic outcome for the region is major. It allowed for the creation of more than 800 permanent jobs. The project has moreover facilitated the creation of roads and social infrastructure indispensable for regional development, prioritizing schools and medical dispensaries. The contribution of our project to the economic development in the Busra and Sen Monorom regions is thus undeniable.

In view of recent information, we consider that the pretended conflicts, which would have generated the procedure in France, as mentioned in the articles cited above, constitute only an instrumentalisation of the French courts, attempting to obtain satisfaction in purely local disputes in Cambodia, which can only be resolved locally.