



PRESS RELEASE

OVER 133 000 HECTARES OF CAMEROON'S EBO FOREST AWARDED TO ELITE-LINKED TIMBER COMPANIES, NEW REPORT FINDS

Launched on the International Day for Biological Diversity, the GI-TOC's latest report links politically connected timber networks to alleged illegal logging, corruption risks and timber exports reaching European markets.

Geneva, 22 May 2026 – The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) released a new report, 'Uprooting Cameroon's elite timber networks', exposing how politically connected business interests are allegedly driving illegal logging and forest destruction in Cameroon.

Cameroon's forests are among the most important in Africa. They cover around 40% of the country and form part of the Congo Basin, the world's largest forest carbon sink. They are also vital to the livelihoods of around 8 million people, providing food, medicine, fuel, construction materials, and cultural continuity for local and Indigenous communities. Yet forest cover loss in Cameroon reached a record high in 2023, with more than 200 000 hectares lost that year, equivalent to roughly one football pitch every two minutes.

The report examines a network of companies linked to Aboubakar Al Fatih, a businessman and senior member of Cameroon's ruling party's Central Committee. The report focuses on Sextransbois, SCIEB, Boisacam and Camvert, all companies that have obtained large logging and agribusiness concessions in opaque circumstances. Civil society organizations report that some of the concessions granted to these politically connected companies were made without public tender or proper consultation with local communities, as required under Cameroonian law.

The launch coincides with the **International Day for Biological Diversity**, whose 2026 theme is 'Acting locally for global impact'. The report shows how local forest destruction, elite impunity and the erosion of community rights in Cameroon are linked to global timber markets and international regulatory responsibilities.

According to the GI-TOC research team behind the report:

'Illegal logging in Cameroon isn't just an environmental issue – it's also related to governance, corruption and organized crime. Our research shows that political influence, opaque corporate structures and weak enforcement enable the destruction of biodiversity-rich forests vital to the climate and local livelihoods. Illegal logging is lucrative; a 2021 report estimates it costs Cameroon about 33 billion Central African francs (US\$59 million) annually.'

The report pays particular attention to the Ebo forest, one of the Gulf of Guinea's last remaining intact forests and one of its most biologically diverse. The Ebo forest stores an estimated 35 million tonnes of carbon and provides habitat for rare and endangered species, including forest elephants and grey parrots.

In 2023, the Cameroonian government resurrected two logging concessions in the Ebo forest: FMU 07-005, covering 65 007 hectares and awarded to SCIEB, and FMU 07-006, covering 68 385 hectares and awarded to Sextransbois. Civil society organizations report that the process violated Cameroonian law, including requirements on public tendering and consultation with local communities.

The report also documents corruption allegations that affect every stage of Cameroon's timber supply chain, from forest classification and permit allocation to harvesting, transport and export. Sources interviewed by the GI-TOC described bribery, fraudulent documentation, timber laundering and the repeated failure of enforcement mechanisms.

The findings have implications beyond Cameroon. Customs data obtained by the GI-TOC shows that in 2023, SCIEB exported timber products worth 405 million CFA francs (around US\$0.72 million) to six EU countries: Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Belgium and Portugal. Between January and October 2024, it exported a further 138.7 million CFA francs, around US\$0.25 million, to five EU countries. This means that EU importers may be in breach of the EU Timber Regulation if they placed timber on the EU market that was logged in violation of the laws of the country of origin.

The report builds on the GI-TOC's wider assessment of organized crime in Cameroon. In the 2025 Global Organized Crime Index, Cameroon scored 7.5 out of 10 for flora crimes, with the country profile describing illegal timber trafficking as 'pervasive' and increasingly organized. The Index noted that unauthorized logging, wood laundering and misuse of logging permits are common, often facilitated by local authorities and foreign traders, and that timber is harvested for export to Asia and Europe.

Methodological note:

This report is based on primary research, including corporate documents and trade data, as well as interviews with a range of sources who possess in-depth knowledge of Cameroon's timber sector, including knowledge of Al Fatih's companies. The evidence for the findings is referenced in the body of the report.

The GI-TOC sought comment from the individuals and entities named in the report. Emails were sent to Alamine Ousmane Mey, Mahmoud Mourtada, Serge Mounier Baroux, Boiscam, Camvert, SCIEB, Sextransbois, and Sudcam. Messages were sent to Aboubakar Al Fatih, Franck Biya, Koulsoumi Alhadji Boukar, and United Development (HK) Co. Ltd. No reply or comment was received from these individuals or entities. In the cases of Christine Baroux, Koulsoumi Alhadji Boukar's younger brother, and Rémy Ze Meka, no contact details could be found, but any comment received will be published by the GI-TOC on its website.

ABOUT THE GI-TOC

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a civil society organization founded in 2013 to promote innovative approaches to tackling organized crime. Its global network comprises experts in law enforcement, governance and development who are dedicated to developing strategies and responses to organized crime. Its mission is to enhance analysis of, encourage action against, and support resilience to organized crime, in order to reduce its negative impact on people, the environment, businesses and states.

For more information or to interview the report's authors, please write to: newsroom@globalinitiative.net

We welcome inquiries from the media and are available to provide additional details, answer questions and arrange interviews at your convenience.