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## Congo, Republic: Deals and partnerships between loggers and conservationists

Three years ago a deal between the authorities of Gabon and a French logging company traded away 10,352 hectares of the Lope Reserve in return for 5,200 hectares of a previously not protected area of remote upland primary forests being added to the reserve (see WRM Bulletin N° 38). The highly controversial deal was arranged by officials of the US-based organization Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

In 2001, the stage moved to Congo Brazzaville. Wildlife Conservation Society announced a deal involving the Goualogo triangle, bordering the Nouabale Ndoki Park, but this time the only reference to compensation for the involved CIB logging company (Congolaise Industrielle des Bois) was in form of strong statements to the effect that there was NO trade off involved (maybe they have learnt).

There have been a lot of public relations around that. Dr. Stoll, the Chief Executive Officer of CIB, stated the following: "CIB has shelved its plans for exploitation of the Goualogo Triangle. There can be no question regarding as this having been some kind of commercial transaction/trade off!"

On August 27th 2002, John Robinson, Vice President at WCS, responded to an inquiry regarding the triangle compensation by stating in an e-mail to Dale Peterson, author of the book "Eating Apes": "The questions that you pass along from Karl reflect his lack of understanding. ... this is the first time I have heard any discussion of 'compensation' between CIB and WCS on the Goualogo (the idea is in itself insulting)."

When questioning the then ITTO (International Tropical Timber Organization) president in a telephone conversation on the deal in 2002, Karl Ammann was told: "The original proposal to cede the southern corner of the park, so that CIB would not have to build expensive roads through swamp, was rejected in a meeting in January 2002, and it was agreed to compensate CIB with a piece of forest along the Central African Republic border."

In December 2002, one of the few tourist visitors which managed to get uninvited through to the concession and the WCS headquarters in Kabo told that the new concession that was given lately in compensation of the triangle is called Pikounda. The information that CIB received sixty thousand hectares towards Pikounda was confirmed by the National Reforestation Service (SNR).

The final conclusion is that a compensation deal has been completed and that, as in the Lope transaction, the loggers won in terms of area gained.

As Karl Ammann incisively puts it: "It is clear that a wide range of players, having in one way or the other been sucked into this 'success' story, had to now evaluate any response to any of the above questions and had to do so within the context of a range of conflicting interests. Deciding on how ecologically or economically important these areas are or were and then to compare them, would most likely end in a never ending and inconclusive debate. The question which arises is: Can conservationists and NGOs afford to be painted with the same brush when it comes to basic

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transparency? Are there any established policies and procedures in place when negotiating such partnership deals. If not, why not? If there are, what are they? Are we walking into a situation where, while logging is green-washed, the timber industry successfully manages to further "black-wash" the conservation establishment?"

All readers, listeners, watchers and consumers of mass media, all the paid journalists and Public Relation companies should have some dignity left and say: Enough is enough!

Adapted from: "Compensation or no compensation? – That seems to be the question", by Karl Ammann, 14 Oct. 2003 (full text at: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Congo/question.html> ), sent by ECOTERRA International, e-mail: NATURAL\_FORESTS@ecoterra.net