

**Question for written answer P-002044/2019  
to the Commission**

Rule 130

**Maria Heubuch (Verts/ALE)**

**Subject:** The EU's response to allegations of mistreatment and human rights abuses in an EDF-funded project in Messok Dja

Since 2018 the European Union Delegation in the Republic of Congo has been funding a EUR 1 million project entitled 'Conservation and Participatory Management of the Messok Dja Protected Area and its Periphery'<sup>1</sup> from the European Development Fund (EDF). The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is implementing the project.

In March 2019, media reports came to light alleging WWF involvement in the mistreatment of indigenous people living in the project area<sup>2</sup>. The media has also reported on the WWF's involvement in human rights abuses in similar conservation projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon and Nepal<sup>3</sup>. Subsequently the UK Charity Commission opened a regulatory compliance case against the WWF<sup>4</sup>.

How has the Commission reacted to these allegations? Did it initiate an investigation, suspend project activities or adopt other measures?

In view of reports that for a long time indigenous people vehemently opposed the creation of the park, what measures will the Commission take to review whether their right to free, prior and informed consent has been respected?

What lessons has the Commission learned from WWF's allegedly flawed complaint mechanisms? What steps has it taken to establish its own administrative complaint mechanism for victims of human rights violations resulting from EU Official Development Assistance-funded activities?

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<sup>1</sup> Contract number 2017/389-485, original title in French 'Conservation et Gestion Participative de l'Aire Protégée de Messok Dja et de sa périphérie'

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/katiejmbaker/wwf-eu-messok-dja-fears-repression-ecoguards>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/tomwarren/wwf-world-wide-fund-nature-parks-torture-death> and <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/katiejmbaker/wwf-report-human-rights-abuses-rangers>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.buzzfeed.com/tomwarren/uk-charity-commission-wwf-investigation>