

**Question for written answer E-010208/2013  
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 117

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Subject: VP/HR - Protection of national park in Guinea-Bissau

The Varela National Park in Guinea-Bissau is situated on the Atlantic coast near the Senegal border facing the Boloma Bijagos islands, which have been under UNESCO protection as a biosphere reserve since 1996<sup>1</sup>. The park, which is inhabited by the Djola people, is characterised by the diversity of its ecosystems.

The Djolas, the park and the plants and animals in it are currently under threat because of the area's mineral wealth. Chinese companies have already declared an interest in exploiting oil deposits expected to be found off the coast, and the latest threat to the Djolas is the current presence of Russian companies in the park to explore the mining potential of several minerals, including radioactive ones.

The Commission has recently stated that it was aware of the situation through its relations with civil society in Guinea-Bissau, but has declared that it could not take action because the EU does not recognise the country's transitional government.

We therefore ask the Vice-President / High Representative the following:

1. Will she raise the issue of the Varela National Park's integrity, and the sustainable development of the territories of the Djola people, in her dialogue with the Guinea-Bissau authorities?
2. Will she take a formal position before the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly on the need to safeguard the park?
3. Will she call on UNESCO to organise a fact-finding mission aimed at identifying the most appropriate measures to take, such as recognition of the park as a natural world heritage site or biosphere reserve, and possibly including it in the Boloma Bijagos islands biosphere reserve?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/africa/guinea-bissau/boloma-bijagos>