



PRESS RELEASE

NGOs call out to Perenco: end the opacity to put a stop to the impunity of the multinational

28 July 2021

July 28, 2021 - In a letter made public today, Sherpa, Friends of the Earth France and Avocats sans Frontières call the oil company Perenco S.A out. Our associations denounce the opacity of Perenco group's organization and operation, as well as the absence of any information on the way the French company takes into account the social and environmental consequences of its activities abroad. While its activities are regularly criticized for their negative impacts on the environment and human rights, the multinational seems to be favoring this opacity, which would allow it to continue operating with impunity.

Perenco group is a family-owned company specializing in the extraction of oil wells at the end of their life. Although little known to the public, numerous reports denounce serious environmental and human rights abuses in the various countries where the group's companies operate. [1] Violations have been repeatedly reported in various countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tunisia, Guatemala or Ecuador. This could point to a systemic and generalized way of operating as well as an utter absence of effective social and environmental policy. [2]

The group is organized in a myriad of shell companies, most of which are registered in tax havens such as the Virgin Islands, Bermuda and the Bahamas, [3] where access to information is completely blocked. [4] Due to the lack of transparency, it is extremely difficult to find information about the group's organization and operation, in particular with respect to the links between the French company Perenco S.A. and the companies operating abroad.

While Perenco S.A., which is headquartered in France, denies any control over the other group's companies when questioned about the damages resulting from its activity abroad, the group does not hesitate to claim French nationality in other circumstances. [5]

The lack of transparency makes it almost impossible to access information that would allow legal action to be taken against companies responsible for environmental damages or human rights violations that may result from their economic activities abroad. According to our information, it is indeed Perenco S.A., through its corporate policy, that controls activities carried out abroad. As such, this policy would constitute the event giving rise to the potential damages. Faced with this

difficulty, our organizations have tried in vain to obtain information: Sherpa and Friends of the Earth France through a legal proceeding in the case relating to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Avocats Sans Frontières through an extra-judicial proceeding (mediation) in the case involving Tunisia. [6]

The publication by Perenco France of its first statement on extra-financial performance confirmed that the company has made the choice of opacity. [7] Although the current legislation can be criticized for its lack of ambition, such a report constitutes one of the rare opportunities [8] to learn more about the way such a multinational operates, as well as the nature of its activities and more importantly the way it handles social and environmental risks. [9] However, Perenco France's report is so incomplete that it does not even fulfill legal provisions. As an example:

- while the exploitation of hydrocarbons is at the heart of its activities and most of its employees are working abroad, Perenco's report makes absolutely no mention of the risks associated with oil operations (all located abroad);
- the only mention of the word oil is ironically located in the section "Fostering employee well-being" within the category "Sailing: preparation courses and participation in the Oil Cup";
- the report only mentions environmental risks that are related to the management of waste from the Parisian premises of the company's headquarters: paper, cardboard, cups, etc.!

In this context, we urge Perenco S.A. to comply with its reporting obligations in terms of extra-financial performance. We also call on Perenco S.A. to put an end to the opacity of its operations, especially by communicating some key information on the group's structure and organization, as well as the links between Perenco France and the group's companies abroad.

[1] **RDC** : Congolese Senate report by the Commission of Inquiry on pollution caused by oil exploitation in Muanda in Bas-Congo province, published in October 2013; Le Monde, [Perenco, boîte noire pétrolière et toxique en RDC](#), October 9, 2019 ; Observatoire des Multinationales, [Perenco en RDC : quand le pétrole rend les pauvres encore plus pauvres](#), January 23, 2014 ; [Muanda : la société civile veut voir clair sur le nouveau contrat d'exploitation du pétrole par Perenco](#), February 22, 2018 ; Radio Okapi, [Le Sénat accuse Perenco de polluer l'eau, l'air et le sol de Moanda au Bas-Congo](#), November 26, 2011; Radio Okapi, [Kongo-Central: PERENCO et SOCIR accusés de sous-traiter leurs employés permanents](#), March 2, 2017. **Gabon** : Medias 241, POLLUTION : [LANCEMENT D'UN AUDIT OPÉRATIONNEL DES INSTALLATIONS DE PERENCO](#), January 22, 2021 ; RFI, [Pollution pétrolière au Gabon: des actions en justice contre la société française Perenco](#), January 23, 2021 ; **Peru/Amazonia**: Observatoire des Multinationales, [Perenco, Mauret et Prom : des firmes pétrolières françaises à l'assaut de l'Amazonie](#), December 20, 2013 ; CCFD-Terre solidaire, [Le Baril ou la vie ? Impacts des activités des entreprises pétrolières françaises Perenco et Mauret & Prom en Amazonie péruvienne : quelles responsabilités des entreprises et des états?](#), September 7, 2015. **Guatemala**: Observatoire des Multinationales, [Perenco au Guatemala : exploiter le pétrole coûte que coûte ?](#), December 13, 2010 ; Le Monde, [L'entreprise pétrolière franco-britannique Perenco en conflit avec des populations du Guatemala](#), October 14, 2012. **Ecuador** : Business and Human Rights Resource Center, [Ecuador: Protesters call for oil company Perenco to "leave & pay for environmental damages"](#), July 4, 2006. **Colombia** : Centro de medios independientes, [Derrame de Petróleo en Petén](#), July 2, 2015. **Venezuela**: Reuters, [Exclusive: France's Perenco, Russia's Gazprombank named in Venezuela graft case – source](#), November 1, 2018; US Department of Justice, [Former Executive Director at Venezuelan State-Owned Oil Company, Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A., Pleads Guilty to Role in Billion-Dollar Money Laundering Conspiracy](#), October 31, 2018. **Trinidad e Tobago**: Trinidad & Tobago Guardian, [Perenco workers beg authorities to step in](#), December 22, 2020. **Camerun**: Médiapart, [À PERENCO CAMEROUN: NATIONAUX ABONNÉS AUX DÉCLASSEMENTS, HARCÈLEMENTS, LICENCIEMENTS](#), July 27, 2016. **Tunisia**: in 2018, a [procedure](#) was started before the French National Contact Point of the OECD in relation to the group's operations in Tunisia.

[2] [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (A/HRC/17/31, 2011); [OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#) (rev. 2011).

[3] For more information, see [here](#).

[4] 39 Perenco Group companies appear in the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists' Bahamas Leaks database, whose files uncovered the existence of shell companies and trusts created in the Bahamas; ICIJ Offshore Leaks

Database, [Results for Perenco](#). For more on the Bahamas Papers, see ICIJ, [Former EU Official Among Politicians Named in New Leak of Offshore Files from The Bahamas](#), September 20, 2016.

[5] Reuters, [Ecuador to pay \\$374 million to French oil company Perenco to settle dispute](#), June 2, 2021.

[6] See Le Monde, [Perenco, boîte noire pétrolière et toxique en RDC](#), October 9, 2019; Press release of Sherpa and Friends of Earth France, [L'opacité continue: la justice refuse de donner accès aux informations détenues par la pétrolière française Perenco](#), September 17, 2020; Press release of Avocats Sans Frontières, [Saisine du PCN français pour établir la transparence sur les activités du Groupe Perenco en Tunisie](#), September 10, 2019. Avocats Sans Frontières and its Tunisian partner, I Watch, have since [withdrawn](#) from the procedure before the French National Contact Point of the OECD.

[7] [Statement on extra-financial performance](#), Perenco S.A., 2020.

[8] Perenco France is not subject to the law on the duty of vigilance (because the number of employees declared is lower than the thresholds provided for by the law), and therefore does not provide further information on this basis.

[9] [Article L. 225-102-1](#) of the French Code of Commerce. This obligation has been enshrined in French law since the law on New Economic Regulations of 2001 and was progressively reinforced in 2010 (Grenelle II law) and 2017 (Order and implementing decree on the publication of non-financial information by certain large companies and certain groups of companies).

Press release

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