

JOINT STATEMENT

ASF and I Watch submit a case to the OECD National Contact Point in France to establish transparency on the Perenco Group's activities in Kebili (Tunisia)

10 december 2019

ASF and I Watch are united in promoting the principles of respect and protection of human rights in the context of the business industry. In this context, on the 26 July 2018, we brought the activities of the Perenco Group in the governorate of Kebili in Tunisia, and their compliance with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, to the attention of the French National Contact Point (NCP) of the OECD.

These principles set out standards of conduct that companies must adopt in terms of respect for human rights, the environment, workers' rights, the fight against corruption and taxation. France and Tunisia have both adhered to these principles. [Accession binds States to establish a National Contact Point](#) in order to ensure that multinational companies promote and respect the guidelines. The NCPs also act as an extra-judicial mechanism of dispute resolution, dealing with complaints or "specific instances," which any interested person may file in relation to the conduct of a corporation in light of the OECD principles.

The referral is primarily motivated by a concern for transparency on the extractive activities carried out by the group around the hydrocarbon wells located in the delegations of El Faouar and Douz, in the Kebili region, and which are the subject of concession contracts between the Tunisian State and the Perenco group. These sites are regularly targeted by [social movements](#) from local populations, who are concerned about [the impact that these activities have or may have on health and the environment](#).

After having tried, to no avail, to get in touch with the Tunisian subsidiary of the Perenco Group in order to gather information on its activities and to initiate a dialogue process, ASF and I Watch turned to the French NCP to establish a framework of dialogue. In this way, we attempted to address the lack of information on the nature of activities carried out on these sites, assess the risks they may pose to human rights and the environment, and the measures taken by the company to prevent and mitigate these risks.

ASF and I Watch regret that more than a year has already passed since the referral, due to the company's initial refusal to recognize French NCP's territorial jurisdiction. However, we welcome the company's change of position, announced on December 6th 2019 in the French [NCP's press release](#), bringing to a close the initial assessment phase.



We note, however, that the NCP has paid disproportionate attention to the various legal arrangements resulting in the “Tunisian branch under Cayman Islands law”, in spite of both the reality of the link between the France-based entity and its Tunisian branch, and the spirit of the Guiding Principles.

We hope, under the auspices of the French NCP, to be able to engage with the Perenco Group in an open discussion on its due diligence system in Tunisia, its tax obligations towards the Tunisian State and the necessary inclusion of the populations living near its business sites in decisions affecting their rights and environment.

Press contact – International : Simon Mallet, smallet@asf.be

Press contact – Tunisia: Zeineb Mrouki (ASF Tunisia), zmrouki@asf.be ;

Manel Ben Achour (I WATCH), manel@iwatch-organisation.org