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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Another oil leak on the marine terminal of the Chad- Cameroon pipeline**

On Thursday morning 22nd April 2010 at 1:45 a.m., another oil leak was declared at the marine terminal of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, offshore Kribi, in the Atlantic Ocean. The incident occurred during the removal operations of crude that were taking place at the loading station of Brut Kome 1 - Kribi. According to COTCO, this was a minor incident caused by a violent storm that had given cause to the temporary halt of unloading operations as a precautionary measure.

The residual crude that was left in the removal duct, allegedly spilled on the deck connected to the marine terminal and effused into the sea. According to COTCO, the total of leaked crude was less than 5 barrels of crude, which was quickly contained and treated, among others through the use of dispersants. No presence of hydrocarbons was observed on the coast.

Fishermen state to have observed traces of oil 12 km from the coast. The population of that area fear the consequences on the sea, especially a shortage of fish. Informed about the oil leak by the naval base, the local administrative authorities immediately set up a crisis unit and associated the village chiefs. Patrols were dispatched to the scene of the incident to inquire about the situation.

While the responsiveness of local government authorities should be commended, questions and concerns still remain particularly regarding the limited means of intervention by the local administration, especially in case this had been a major incident.

## ❖ **Some communication flaws**

The consortium did indeed contact the authorities of Kribi and prepared a press release immediately after the incident. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that anxiety remains in some villages where fishermen fear a negative impact on their activities.

- Communities were informed by the local administrative authorities and by the village chiefs. Yet, there exist no direct relations between the consortium and the communities as indispensable means for information sharing about such rather technical questions.
- Local radio stations were put to use as well as they could have been to disseminate information to the communities
- To date, the Pipeline Steering and Monitoring Committee (CPSP) has as Cameroonian counterpart in this project still not made any statement regarding this incident. “*A deafening silence*” laments Samuel Nguiffo, General Secretary of the Center for Environment and Development (CED). “*The activities of the CPSP specifically focus on monitoring and supervision of construction activities and the operations of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline. Part of its responsibility after such an incident is to verify and validate the information provided by the consortium, to disclose its scope and scale, to communicate potential risks and mitigation measures, and to inform the general public about the activities of the pipeline operator and the risks pertaining to their immediate environment. CPSP’s silence after such an incident is deplorable,*” he added.

## ❖ **One disaster too much**

This is the second known oil spill reported by COTCO concerning the marine terminal since it became operational in 2003. Despite the assumed existence of technological means to detect leaks, it is important to question the capability of COTO to prevent and discover in time this kind of incidents, and better yet to avoid them. “*We can minimize this last incident but these numerous spills into the sea will have serious consequences in the long term. The destruction of marine species, the scarcity of fish, and water pollution will inevitably give a blow to the environment,*” declared Honoré Ndoumbe Nkotto, Coordinator of the Cameroon Foundation of Rationalized Actions and the Formation on the Environment (FOCARFE).

## ❖ **The government's ability to manage oil spills must be strengthened**

- COTCO affirms that less than five barrels of oil spilled into the sea. The Cameroonian authorities that have skimmed over the zone of the incident cannot precisely determine the amount of petrol that they perceived. Once again, the only data available about a given spill is that, which is provided by the consortium... *“It is worrisome that the Cameroonian government cannot draft and publish its own report of this incident. The CPSP should do an independent investigation of the catastrophe to reassure the people,”* affirms Valéry Nodem of Network of Fight against Hunger (RELUFA).
- In November 2009, and after several years of waiting, Cameroon finally adopted its National Intervention Plan in case of Accidental Hydrocarbons Spills. Various courses have been organized for the different authorities involved in the monitoring of this project to prepare them to better deal with incidents of such nature. Five months after its adoption, the plan remains unknown to the public, and even worse non-operational, leaving a considerable margin for maneuver by the consortium. *«Kribi is the main tourist city in Cameroon, and we cannot accept the risk of suffering a major oil accident in this town. It would be disastrous for the environment and for the local economy. The administration must acquire as soon as possible all capacities that permit it to be operational in the case of a major incident. The oil spill observed in the Gulf of Mexico should make us reflect and inspire us to action,”* worries Samuel Nguiffo of the Center for the Environment and Development (CED).

### **In light of these shortcomings, we demand :**

#### **1. from COTCO :**

- a. To organize a public meeting with the people of Kribi to inform them of the nature, extent, and contours of the incident ;
- b. To inform the general public in a broader manner about the origins, extent and possible consequences of this oil leak ;

- c. Establish a free emergency number which is open 24/24 to facilitate communications between the communities and the consortium for any future incidents of this nature

**2. from the Government of Cameroon :**

- a. To render operational as a matter of urgency the national intervention plan in case of accidental hydrocarbon spill, adopted in November 2009. If made effective, it will allow the administration « to inform the decision-making process and to ensure readiness at a national level, in prevention of and in response to a spill of hydrocarbons that could occur on the Cameroonian territory »
- b. To make public the national emergency plan in case of an oil leakage

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