
[Gabon: Communities Say NO to the Great Mayumba Project](#)

On November 2021, the Collective of Upper and Lower Banio communities in Nyanga province, Gabon, released the **Bana / Mayumba Declaration** in which they call for the suspension of the **GRANDE MAYUMBA project (1)**, a multi-concession megaproject run by the **Grande Mayumba Development Company** and marketing itself as a **so-called Nature-Based Solution**. [>>> Download the declaration in pdf](#)

Communities released the Declaration on the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice on 5 November. By this time, business leaders and governments had used the platform of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, to make big announcements about the need for the global South to protect forests for the carbon they store, for example in the [Glasgow Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#) or the [Joint Donor Statement on the Congo Basin Forests \(2\)](#).

Their interest in **above-ground carbon stored in other people's forests** stood in sharp contrast with their unwillingness to press ahead with an action plan to stop the continued destruction of **underground ancient carbon stores** for the extraction of fossil fuels – oil, coal and gas. It is this destruction of the underground fossil carbon stores to fuel the capitalist economy that is the principal cause of the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that is causing climate chaos.

These statements at the margins of the UN climate summit are also **a concern for communities because when such pledges are turned into action on the ground, they tend to result in more hardship and violation of community rights to their land.**

Noting that the area granted to the Grande Mayumba project is enormous – nearly 1 million hectares of land and coastal zone - the **Bana / Mayumba Declaration** highlights community concerns about the project leading to new restrictions on the communities' use of the land and a further increase in human / wildlife conflicts. Citing the experience of multiple restrictions imposed on communities following the expansion of marine and lagoon protected areas in the province, the statement cites community concerns about food insecurity as a result of the project. The lack of clarity around the Grande Mayumba project activities and the absence of any public consultation about the project are also raised in the community statement.

The expansion of a marine protected area in Mayumba is having a severe impact on artisanal fisherfolk in Mayumba. They have seen their livelihoods put in jeopardy in recent months because the extension of the protected coastal zone makes their fishing impossible (and dangerous because most artisanal fishermen go out in small boats, many without outboard motor). Meanwhile, commercial fishing fleets can be seen from ashore, operating day and night, seemingly undisturbed. The restrictions imposed by the Marine Park administration on artisanal fishing already affect food sovereignty in the town of Mayumba and beyond.

The Bana / Mayumba Declaration concludes with a call on the government of Gabon to

suspend the Great Mayumba project.

(1) *The Grande Mayumba project dates back to 2011, when the government of Gabon and a company then called SFM Africa Ltd.# set up the Grande Mayumba Development Company (GMDC) as a public-private partnership. 34% of the company are held by the Gabonese government, while 66% are in the hands of SFM Africa Ltd., today known as African Conservation Development Group – ACDG.# Both SFM and ACDG were set up by South African businessman Alan Bernstein.*

(2) See also this article on REDD Monitor: [The Glasgow Declaration on Forests is far from "unprecedented". It's just another in a long line of meaningless UN declarations](#)

[>>> Download the declaration in pdf](#)

Bana / Mayumba Declaration "NO to the Great Mayumba project"

- Considering the policies defined and adopted by States and international bodies for the protection of the environment;
- Considering the important place of the forest in the mitigation of global warming;
- Considering Gabon's commitment to the fight against climate change;
- Considering the leadership role played by President Ali Bongo Ondimba in forest conservation;
- Considering the role of spokesperson for Africa at COP 26 played by the President of the Gabonese Republic;
- Considering the vulnerability of the city of Mayumba to climate change
- Considering the lack of clarity around the Grande Mayumba project;
- Considering that the Great Mayumba project has never been the subject of any public consultation;
- Considering that the promoter of this project has accounts in tax havens;
- Considering that the area granted to this project is enormous and knowing that it will lead to new restrictions on the communities;
- Considering the multiple restrictions imposed on communities following the new creation of marine and lagoon protected areas;
- Considering the increase in human/wildlife conflicts;
- Considering the land tenure insecurity that the communities are confronted with;
- Considering the undeniable catalytic role of defenders of community rights through monitoring missions for the change of mentalities oriented towards sustainability;
- Considering the activities and actions carried out by women at the local level for the preservation of food sovereignty;
- Considering the strong added value brought by women within the framework of family farming;
- Conscious of the fact that the rural domain will be strongly impacted and lead to strong food insecurity;

We, representatives of the communities of the department of Basse-Banio and the municipality of Mayumba who work for the survival of our neighborhoods and villages and fight against social, environmental and climatic inequalities signatories of this declaration, meeting at the Town Hall on November 05, 2021,

Recommend the following to the government:

-
1. The suspension of the Great Mayumba project
 2. Repeal of the decree creating the Park at the mouth of the Banio
 3. To initiate major construction work on the levees to fight against the rise in sea level
 4. The establishment of a Climate Fund (FC) to address the vulnerability of the city of Mayumba to climate change
 5. An assessment of the elephant population in Gabon
 6. The creation of a Provincial Fund for the Compensation of victims of wildlife.

MAYUMBA, November 05, 2021