Dear Ms Longo,

I would like to thank you for your message dated 10th July 2024 informing us of new allegations of abuses by employees of African Parks (AP) towards Baka people in and around the Odzala-Kokoua national park in the Republic of Congo and challenging the independence of the investigation conducted by Omnia Strategy LLP.

As mentioned in our previous letter dated 4 June 2024, the European Commission takes any allegation of possible violations of the rights of Baka people in the Republic of Congo by any organisation funded by the EU or its employees, very seriously.

In view of the specific and serious allegations that you are making, namely threats and intimidation by African Parks (AP) guards towards Baka hunter-gatherers and the beatings of Baka women and children by AP employees, I would appreciate it if you would share the factual information (place, dates, etc.) related to these events. In this specific context, we understand that a cautious approach to data and information sharing must be followed as well as the need to respect confidentiality and safety concerns of individuals to reduce the risk of causing further harm to victims.

Regarding the investigation conducted by Omnia Strategy LLP, the law firm hired by AP to independently investigate allegations of human rights violations against local communities and indigenous populations occurring in or connected to the Odzala-Kokoua National Park implicating AP and the Odzala-Kokoua Foundation, we are informed that the investigation is ongoing and that the report will be finalised later this year.

Regarding the way in which the investigation is being conducted, we have requested AP to provide us with the detailed methodology of the investigation to conduct our own assessment.

We also are aware that Omnia Strategy LLP released, on 12 July 2024, a statement in which the firm replies to your observations and refers to previous communications they sent to your organisation, inviting you to share any information that you consider relevant with regard to reported violations or that might be relevant to the investigation more generally, including information related to risks of reprisals against potential victims and witnesses and feedback on the clarifications provided. They have offered to meet with your organization to discuss how best to progress the situation, including the steps that may be
required to ensure the safe, secure, and appropriate transmitting of information to the independent investigation. They continue to seek evidence from your organization as from other NGO stakeholders.

In this context, I would invite you to support and contribute directly to the independent investigation to shed light on the situation experienced by the Baka people in and around the Odzala-Kokoua national park.

Yours sincerely,

Electronically signed

Hans STAUßBOLL