

Attention to  
Frédéric Oudéa, Chief Executive Officer  
Tour Société Générale, La Défense  
75886 Paris Cedex 18

Paris, 24th October 2013

## **Call to step down from Alpha Coal Project**

Dear Mr. Oudéa,

With this open letter, we are writing with regard to the advisory service that your bank provides to GVK on the Alpha Coal project in the state of Queensland, Australia.

The Alpha Coal project is a proposed 30 million tonne per year coal mine located in the as yet undeveloped Galilee Basin of Queensland. We are very concerned about the impacts of this project on climate, the Great Barrier Reef and the local environment, and we would like to remind you of the following issues.

Over the 30-year lifespan of the Alpha Coal mine, the mining operations and the burning of the coal produced will create approximately 1,8 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. As the first of a series of planned projects in the Galilee Basin, it could also play a key role in the opening up of the region, magnifying the carbon impact of the Alpha project many times over. Indeed, the report from Greenpeace *Cooking the Climate, Wrecking the Reef: the global implications of coal exports from Australia's Galilee Basin* finds that full exploitation of the Galilee Basin as proposed is consistent with scenarios that would lead to 6 degrees of global warming above pre-industrial levels.

To add to this, climate change along with ocean acidification from burning fossil fuels and coastal industrialization induced by the proposed mega port at Abbot Point – which could become the largest coal port in the world – would have substantial impacts on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. To endanger this UNESCO site – one of the most iconic natural World Heritage sites on Earth – would place at risk areas of critical habitat, biodiversity and migratory species.

We remind you that the United Nations World Heritage Committee has repeatedly expressed its extreme concern for the state of the Great Barrier Reef over the past two years and at the 36th World Heritage Committee meeting in St Petersburg on 28 June 2012, warned that unless measures were taken to protect the Reef, it could be inscribed on the list of World Heritage Sites “in danger”<sup>1</sup>. The World Heritage Committee requested that the Australian Government:

*not permit any new port development or associated infrastructure outside of the existing and long established major port areas within or adjoining the property, and to ensure that development is not permitted if it would impact individually or cumulatively on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.*

Beyond the dramatic impacts the project would have on climate and on the Great Barrier Reef, coal mining would directly threaten the health of the employees of the mine and of the local population. The conversion of farmland into mines or acquisition of land for the construction of a rail corridor and the diversion of water resources on which many families and farms depend to

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<sup>1</sup> Documents from the 36th Session of the World Heritage Committee are available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/36COM/documents/>

supply the mine are also some of great concern.

Moreover, the Alpha Coal project would directly contradict the principles and intent of the Carbon Disclosure Project and the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment, of which Société Générale is a member. As a member of the Equator Principles, Société Générale is also expected to uphold the IFC Performance Standards. IFC Performance Standard 6 requires clients to preserve internationally recognized areas, which include UNESCO Natural World Heritage Sites such as the Great Barrier Reef.

For all these reasons, we believe that to carry on with the provision of advisory service or debt for the Alpha Coal project would be highly irresponsible. After the US bank Citi stopped its financial advising of the project earlier this year, we urge you to do the same and immediately and publicly step down from this project.

We are strongly supportive of the Australian community groups and individuals opposing the project and firmly intend to mobilize in order to prevent such a harmful project from proceeding.

We would appreciate a formal response to this letter by November 9th. If you would like to discuss any of the matters raised in this letter, please be in contact with Lucie Pinson, Les Amis de la Terre private finance campaigner by email ([lucie.pinson@amisdelaterre.org](mailto:lucie.pinson@amisdelaterre.org)), telephone (+33 (0)1 48 51 18 98).

Regards,

## **France**

Lucie Pinson, Les Amis de la Terre

Morgane Créach, Réseau Action Climat

Sandra Cossart, Sherpa

Attac, Wilfried Maurin

Clémence Hutin, 350.org France

Gaël Trubert, Fondation Danielle Mitterrand – France Libertés

Marie Atinault, Effet de serre toi-même

Jean Sireyjol, Taca

Justine Peullemeule, Ritimo

## **Australia**

Derec Davies, Coast and Country Queensland Association

Cam Walker, Friends of the Earth Australia

Julien Vincent, Market Forces

Erland Howden, Greenpeace Australia

Aviva Imhof, The Sunrise Project

Jenny Goldie, Climate Action Monaro

Philippe Dupuy, Casino Environment Centre

Lee K Curtis, Protect the Bush Alliance

Luke Fletcher, Jubilee Australia

Wendy Tubman, North Queensland Conservation Council

Julie Lyford, Groundswell Gloucester

Patricia Julien, Mackay Conservation Group

Leif Nielsen Lemke, Bellingen Environment Centre

Ian Hoch and Paola Cassoni, Bimblebox Nature Refuge

Alan Roberts, Nimbin Environment Centre

Ian Mack, Yarra Climate Action Now Inc.

Ben Pennings, Generation Alpha

Aaron Packard, 350.org Australia

Cameron Poustie, Conservation Council of WA.

Ken Brown, Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining

John Jeayes, North Coast Environment Council

Scott Sledge, Northern Rivers Guardians

## **International**

Yann Louvel, BankTrack, International

Deborah Perez Lambert, ECA-Watch, International

Emma Biermann, 350.org Europe

## **Argentina**

Jorge Daniel Taillant, Center for Human Rights and Environment

## **Belgium**

Kris Vanslambrouck, 11.11.11 Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement

## **Germany**

Regine Richter, Heffa Schuecking, Urgewald

Heike Drillisch, GegenStroemung – CounterCurrent

## **India**

Soumya Dutta, Beyond Copenhagen Collective

## **Indonesia**

Stephanie Fried, Ulu Foundation

Abetnego Tarigan, WALHI - Friends of the Earth Indonesia

## **Japon**

Hozue Hatae, Friends of the Earth Japan

## **Kosovo**

Visar Azemi, Kosovo Civil Society Consortium for Sustainable Development

## **Mexico**

Gustavo Castro, Movimiento Mesoamericano contra el Modelo Extractivo Minero

Gustavo Castro, Red Mexicana de Afectados por la Minería

Gustavo Castro, Otros Mundos AC/Amigos de la Tierra México

## **Mozambique**

Anabela Lemos, Justica Ambiental (JA!) / Friends of the Earth Mozambique

## **Netherlands**

Wiert Wietsema, Both Ends

## **Portugal**

Alba Valle, Euronatura

## **South Africa**

Bobby Peek Groundwork/Friends of the Earth South Africa

## **Spain**

Monica Vargas C., Observatoire de la Dette dans la Globalisation (ODG-Debtwatch)

## **Switzerland**

Rico Kessler, Pro Natura/FoE Switzerland

## **United Kingdom**

The Corner House, Nick Hildyard

## **United-States**

Karen Orenstein, Friends of the Earth US

Amanda Starbuck, Rainforest Action Network

Nicole Ghio, Sierra Club