



## Swiss Commodity Traders Must Respect Africa's Right To Health And Stop Shipping Toxic Fuel

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The Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP) today launches a report published by its partner Public EYE, titled "Dirty Diesel". The report reveals how Swiss commodity trading firms exploit lax regulatory standards to sell to African consumers fuel with high sulfur content. Produced by the trading firms themselves, these types of fuel have long been banned in Europe. They contribute significantly to the rapidly rising air pollution in African cities and jeopardize the health of millions of people. In a petition addressed to Trafigura, Public Eye and its West African partners call on the Geneva-based commodities giant only to sell fuel that meets European standards in all of its operations around the world.

Based on three years of research, the "Dirty Diesel" study highlights for the first time the pivotal role played by Swiss commodity trading companies in Africa's fuel industry and reveals the scandalous business model behind a supply chain completely controlled by these companies in their multiple roles as producers, suppliers, and — in some regions — operators of gas station networks. In West Africa especially, Vitol, Trafigura and Addax & Oryx ruthlessly exploit weak regulatory standards and make the local urban populations pay with their health. Public Eye researchers drew fuel at local pumps in eight countries. The result was shocking: as the analysis revealed, the diesel samples contained **up to 378 times more sulfur** than is permitted in Europe. Furthermore, other toxic substances, such as benzene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, were also found in concentrations that are also banned in Europe.

The 160-page report also shows that the trading companies do not only ship dirty diesel and dirty gasoline — and in some areas even sell it at their own pumps — but also produce both fuels themselves. On land or at sea, they mix up a petrochemical cocktail from refinery products and other components known in the industry as "**African Quality**". These toxic fuels are mainly mixed in the ARA-Zone (Amsterdam-Rotterdam-Antwerp) where Swiss trading firms have their own refineries and storage facilities. Many West African countries that export high grade crude oil to Europe receive toxic low quality fuel in return.

Producing and selling such products is illegitimate and violates the African populations' right to health. According to a recent UN study, the populations in the continent's major urban centers suffer from the **most rapidly increasing levels of air pollution in the world**. The prestigious organization, ICCT(international council on clean transportation)\*\*, estimates that by 2030 Africa will have three times as many deaths from traffic-related particle dust than Europe, Japan, and the

US combined. Respiratory illnesses are already a major health issue and diesel fumes can cause cancer. To disarm this timed bomb, the governments of the affected countries need to set and enforce stricter standards. But the Swiss commodity companies, too, must respect human rights wherever they do business — and comply with the UN-Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights adopted in 2011.

CEO Jeremy Weir wrote in last year's sustainability report that Trafigura (the leading Swiss oil trader in Africa) wants to “become acknowledged sector leaders in the way we manage corporate responsibility”. The company also intends to adapt its business practices to the aforementioned UN guidelines. In order to remind the commodities giant of its good intentions, Public Eye and its West African partner organizations will be shipping a container full of toxic air from Accra, the capital of Ghana, back to Geneva in late September. With this symbolic **“Return to Sender”-campaign**, the NGOs are inviting Trafigura to put its money where its mouth is and stop selling fuel that does not meet European standards anywhere in the world.

ACEP recognizes the important role Oil traders play in the economies of African nations which must certainly come with some reward. However, there is also the responsibility on the traders to be ethical and just to assess negative impact of their business. In the words of the Deputy Executive Director of the Centre, Benjamin Boakye “making profit is good but profit must also be made with the moral cap on”. Traders must therefore respect the right of citizens of Africa to good health and deliver the quality fuel which the same traders deliver to the European Market.

We also call on African governments to immediately take steps to tighten regulations to stop commodity traders from trading the health of hard working citizens for profit. The example of Kenya to limit Sulphur content to 50ppm is worth emulating by the rest of the continent. It is therefore a collective duty on all- government, regulators, Civil Society, the Media and the relevant stakeholders to be part of the advocacy to reduce pollution and its attendant health risks.

**For more information** about the report and the campaign contact:

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\* For around 50 years, the Swiss NGO Public Eye (formerly Berne Declaration) has offered a critical analysis of the impact that Switzerland, and its companies, has on poorer countries. Through its research and campaigning, and with the support of its more than 25,000 members, Public Eye fights against injustices with a significant link to Switzerland and demands the respect of human rights throughout the world.

\*\* In May 2014, the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) discovered that a US Jetta and a US Passat released four times as much nitrogen oxide on the street as they did in the laboratory. The non-profit organization informed the US Environmental Protection Agency and

the Californian Air Resources Board about this manipulation – and thereby caught the world's attention with what became known as the VW scandal.