In 2012, the African Development Bank (the « Bank »), in its capacity as Trustee of the Congo Basin Forest Fund (the CBFF), approved a grant to finance the Agroforestry Development Support Project (the Project or PADA Project), in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The technical, biophysical and cartographic studies formed one of the components of the Project. In September 2012, the Project Coordination Unit conducted a recruitment process for the position of a consultant to execute the above-mentioned Project component; at the end of this process, the Contract was awarded to Géo Sciences International SARL, a Cameroonian firm (Respondent Géo Sciences).

Following this award, a complaint from a CBFF donor country reported that the recruitment process had been tampered in favour of Géo Sciences. The complaint also revealed that a Bank staff in charge of the PADA Project was involved in the process and had a personal interest in Géo Sciences firm. PIAC therefore decided to conduct an investigation and concluded that the Respondent Géo Sciences had engaged in several fraudulent practices. When submitting its offer during the bidding process, the Respondent had: (i) provided false contract references in order to demonstrate its experience in the execution of similar studies; (ii) made a false statement regarding the experts’ and its personnel’s remuneration level, and supplied false documentation in support of this; and (iii) made a false statement regarding the absence of conflict of interest. The Respondent did so in order to meet the bidding qualification criteria, increase its financial bid and avoid disqualification, its final aim being to be awarded the contract. PIAC presented a Findings of Sanctionable Practices (the FoSP) to the Sanctions Office on 21st November, 2017.

Upon review of the case, the Sanctions Commissioner determined that the FoSP contained *prima facie* evidence in support of the alleged fraud. He therefore issued a Notice of Sanctions Proceedings against the Respondent on 6th December, 2017. The Respondent was informed of his right to contest the FoSP within sixty (60) days of its receipt. On 7th February, 2018, Géo Sciences’ legal representative requested a seven-day period to submit the Respondent’s Response. The Sanctions Office notified him that the Respondent’s Response was to be submitted by no later than the 12th February 2018. Nonetheless, the Respondent did not submit a Response.

On reviewing the case further, the Sanctions Commissioner concluded that it was *more likely than not* that the Respondent engaged in the alleged fraudulent practices. Therefore, on 26th March 2018, the Sanctions Commissioner decided that the Respondent be debarred for a period of four (4) years with conditional release. The Respondent will be released from debarment upon lapse of the four (4) year debarment period, subject to the Respondent Géo Sciences adopting an Integrity Compliance Program and an integrity training program for its management personnel, to the satisfaction of the Bank.

The Sanctions decision was not contested before the Sanctions Appeals Board. It therefore remains final and binding.