SUMMARY

The Press Council sees no reason to revise its conclusion in RvdJ 2025/14 regarding a complaint by Carbon Tanzania Ltd. against M. Hooft van Huysduynen, J. Juffermans and Trouw. Trouw has not demonstrated that the Council based its conclusion on incorrect findings. The fact that the complainant disagrees with the Council's considerations and judgement is insufficient grounds for granting a request for review.

Conclusion of the Press Council regarding the
request from

the editor-in-chief of Trouw

to review the Council's conclusion of 4 June 2025 (RvdJ 2025/14) regarding the complaint by

Carbon Tanzania Ltd.

On 2 July 2025, Mr J. Baars, senior lawyer at DPG Media, requested on behalf of Trouw (the applicant) a review of the conclusion of 4 June 2025 concerning the complaint by Carbon Tanzania Ltd. against M. Hooft van Huysduynen, J. Juffermans and the editor-in-chief of Trouw. The response from Carbon Tanzania Ltd. dated 29 July 2025 was also taken into account in assessing the request.

The request was considered at the Council's hearing on 19 September 2025 in a review chamber without the parties being present.

THE FACTS

On 4 February 2025, Carbon Tanzania Ltd. lodged a complaint against M. Hooft van Huysduynen, J. Juffermans and the editor-in-chief of Trouw about the article published on 6 December 2024 *entitled 'Billionaires use hunter-gatherers to offset CO2 emissions. "A new form of colonialism'"*.

On 4 June 2025, the Council concluded – insofar as relevant to this review procedure – that the complaint was well-founded with regard to the parts of the complaint that the article presented a one-sided and distorted picture and that insufficient consideration had been given to the other side of the argument.

The Council considered the following in this regard:

> *"The article establishes a link between abuses in carbon credits in general and the situation surrounding the carbon project in which the complainant is involved. The complainant is seriously discredited because she is accused of (neo)colonialism by an anonymous source. This term is even used in the headline and introduction to the article. At the hearing, it emerged that Trouw deliberately used the loaded term 'colonialism', despite its negative connotations.*
> *Furthermore, partly due to the structure of the article, the impression is created that there are abuses in the carbon project in which the complainant is involved. For example, the Hadzabe's knowledge of the project, both at the time of its inception and*

current knowledge, is called into question. The complainant is also accused of exaggerating the threat of deforestation in order to sell more carbon credits. Furthermore, there are reports about the proceeds from the project, of which too little may be going to the Hadzabe, and it remains unclear whether the complainant or the intermediary is responsible for this. Finally, in the context of the earlier information, the last passage about a former hunter who says that all sacred sites have disappeared gives the impression that the complainant's carbon project played a role in this and that there is also misconduct in this respect.

In the Council's opinion, the allegations are not sufficiently supported by the facts and, partly due to the lack of context and adequate representation of the other side of the story in the publication, the reporting on the complainant and her project is unbalanced. The loaded term '(neo)colonialism' is not explained, nor is it made clear why this term would apply to the complainant or her carbon project mentioned in the article. The accusation is attributed in the article to an anonymous source, while the views of scientists and, more importantly, of the Hadzabe and the complainant herself are missing from the article.

With regard to the allegations that the threat of deforestation is being overestimated and that the Hadzabe were unable to make an informed decision during the development of the project, only marginal and cautious counterarguments have been included. With regard to the other allegations, the article does not indicate that the complainant was actually asked for a counterargument.

This has resulted in a one-sided and distorted picture of the complainant, which is reinforced by the omission of any exonerating information or – as with the rebuttal that was included – its trivialisation.

For example, the sentence stating that the Hadzabe agree with the complainant's assertion that autonomy and community participation are cornerstones of the project, which is highly relevant in context but succinctly formulated, is immediately weakened by the unsubstantiated statement that (anonymous) independent activists are critical and believe that most Hadzabe do not understand how carbon projects work. Furthermore, the article provided by the complainant to refute the accusation that deforestation is being overestimated has been marginalised by Trouw by questioning the expertise of the author.

In response to the accusation that the Hadzabe had insufficient knowledge when the project was set up, it was sufficient to state that the complainant had followed Plan Vivo's regulations, without including the complainant's response that the point for improvement regarding the Hadzabe's knowledge to make informed decisions had already been addressed before Plan Vivo's approval. Furthermore, it emerged at the hearing that Trouw had, without good reason, failed to include any exonerating information in the article, such as the current research cited by the complainant, which included a survey of 400 Hadzabe about the carbon project. The claim that the Hadzabe lack the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about participating in the project is based on the 2012 assessment report, without further investigation of the circumstances at the time or verification with the Hadzabe themselves. With regard to the other allegations, it also remains unclear what the Hadzabe themselves think, while the thrust of the allegations is that they are disadvantaged by the project, or at least have insufficient knowledge of the risks associated with it. This reinforces the one-sidedness of the article.

In short, Trouw published a one-sided and distorted report about the complainant and the project, partly because serious allegations were published without sufficient grounds and without proper consideration of the other side of the story. The complaint is therefore well-founded on this point.

THE POSITIONS OF THE PARTIES

The applicant argues, in summary, that the Council wrongly based its decision on certain factual assumptions. The anonymous source that accuses Carbon Tanzania Ltd. of (neo)colonialism in the article is a member of the Hadzabe with a relevant academic background. On that basis, it is incorrect to assume that this source is not a Hadzabe or an expert and to base the assessment of the nuance in the article on that assumption. Furthermore, the reasoning that, because the source is anonymous, its view had to be substantiated further is not valid. Anonymity says nothing about (the lack of) expertise or representativeness. Moreover, the applicant has previously argued that the term '(neo)colonialism' has been used by several (expert) persons in the same context.
In addition, the applicant disputes the conclusion that she questioned the expertise of the author of an article on deforestation cited by the complainant. The basic principle in journalism is precisely that sources are critically evaluated. In the case of a non-peer-reviewed article by an author with commercial interests, this justifies a critical interpretation, also from the point of view of objective reporting. In this regard, the applicant stated that the author is a scientist and indicated that he himself has an interest in carbon credits.
Finally, the applicant believes that she did not have to include the report on a survey among the Hadzabe in the publication, because it does not show that the Hadzabe understand how carbon credit projects work. It does not follow from the Council's considerations that it has established that the report does support the refutation of the statement in the article and that the applicant should therefore have included it in her article.
It follows from the above that the Council's conclusion is (partly) based on facts whose accuracy the Council wrongly assumed, so that the request for review must be granted, according to the applicant.

Carbon Tanzania has responded to this as follows (also summarised). The additional information about the anonymous source does not alter the fact that the article does not provide the reader with sufficient information, in particular about why the term '(neo)colonialism' would apply to Carbon Tanzania or its carbon project.
Nor can the Council's conclusion be undermined by the fact that the applicant questioned the independence of the author of the article on deforestation rather than his expertise, without substantively refuting his views.
The applicant's argument concerning the survey among the Hadzabe also ignores the Council's overarching conclusion that the applicant has painted a one-sided and distorted picture and has omitted or downplayed exculpatory information provided by Carbon Tanzania. Moreover, the Trouw article is not only about the Hadzabe's knowledge of the carbon project, but also about the consequences for their lives. It is precisely for this reason that the report on the survey is relevant.
According to Carbon Tanzania, the request for review mainly contains a repetition or further elaboration of the applicant's previous arguments and does not contain any facts whose accuracy the Council has wrongly assumed.

ASSESSMENT OF THE REQUEST

A review of a previous conclusion is possible (among other things) if an applicant can demonstrate that the Council's conclusion is 'based on facts whose accuracy the Council has wrongly assumed'. The applicant has not done so.

In support of her request, the applicant first provided further information about her anonymous source. However, this does not concern new facts, but information that was already known to the applicant or could reasonably have been known to her at the time the complaint was heard at the hearing on 28 March 2025. A request for review cannot be granted if it is based on facts that could have been submitted by the applicant earlier. The fact that the applicant may not have responded adequately to the complainant's arguments is her responsibility.

Furthermore, the petition contains (a further elaboration of) arguments that the petitioner previously formulated in the proceedings and that the Council (in essence) took into account in its assessment. There is no evidence that the Council based its assessment on incorrect findings.

In essence, the petitioner is requesting a reassessment of the complaint because she does not agree with the considerations made by the Council. However, the Council's Rules of Procedure do not provide for such an (appeal) procedure. The Rules of Procedure do not allow for a review based (solely) on a further explanation or more detailed elaboration of previous arguments.

Relevant previous conclusions of the Council: RvdJ 2025/17, RvdJ 2021/47, RvdJ 2021/36 and RvdJ 2014/27
Relevant article from the Regulations governing the Council's working methods: 10a(1)

CONCLUSION

The request for review is rejected.

Thus determined by the Council on 14 November 2025 by S. Djebali, chair, Dr H.P. Groenhart, L.C. Hauben, J. Hoogenberg and M. Thie, members, in the presence of D.C. Koene, secretary, and G.A. van de Sluis, deputy secretary.

Chairperson Secretary