

Tuesday, Lusaka (February 1, 2022)



PRESS STATEMENT

CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNED WITH MINING IN LOWER ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

The Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) is deeply concerned by media reports suggesting that government has given a go-ahead to the highly controversial open-pit mining project in the heart of the Lower Zambezi National Park (LZNP).

The project is in stark contrast to, and a deviation from pronouncements and policy directions of the New Dawn Administration, espoused both locally and internationally in different media.

Allowing the mining project to proceed based on legal technicalities would be a serious indictment to the New Dawn administration, bringing into question its commitment to environmental sustainability.

CEJ calls upon the Minister of Environment and Green Economy to urgently issue a Ministerial statement on the matter.

Noting the stage at which the matter has reached, which seemed to have informed the Minister's decision, CEJ further calls upon the President, His Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema to recall his past pronouncements and Zambia's domestic legislation and various international treaties the country is a party to relevant to informing the decision process on the project.

A firm decision on this project is his chance to do the right thing, stand with the people, leverage political will, and practically demonstrate the country's commitments to the environmental ethos by exercising his executive authority over the matter. Zambia will be failing to practically demonstrate her commitment to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration should the open pit mine project proceed.

CEJ will continue to stand by ZEMA's initial decision which rejected the Environmental & Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the project, citing strong, credible science for not approving the project. Regrettably, a weakness in the attendant legislation which allows the Minister to overturn a decision by the competent authority was actively pursued resulting in the protracted controversies surrounding the project.

Our recommendations:

- The New Dawn government to maintain its position and promise made on zero mining in lower Zambezi.
- Government must revoke both mining license and environmental approvals given to developing the open-pit copper mine in the heart of the Lower Zambezi.

- Government to review the clause in the Environmental Management Act of 2011 which empowers the Minister to overturn ZEMA's decision when investors appeal.

Issued By:

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