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## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **FIND ALTERNATIVE MINE SITE FOR MWEMBESHI RESOURCES- CEJ URGES GOVT**

Centre for Environment Justice - CEJ has urged Government to negotiate with Mwembeshi Resources to give it alternative land for copper mining instead of Lower Zambezi National Park.

CEJ Head of Research Freeman Mubanga says the investor should accept alternative land if it means well to the Republic of Zambia.

He says the Lower Zambezi fracas has been an issue of contemptuous debate for over 8 years now from the first time then Minister of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Harry Kalaba overruled ZEMA's decision to disapprove mining in the heart of the Lower Zambezi National Park (LZNP).

Mr. Mubanga says CEJ understands that there are several Copper deposits dotted around the country where mining can be done as opposed to mining in protected areas.

The CEJ Head of Research says it is interesting to learn that Zambia is willing to risk losing out on its functional rich ecosystems all because of Copper mining when there are places where such investments can be done without threatening ecologically sensitive areas.

"CEJ is urging the government to identify another site where Mwembeshi Resources can carry out their mining activities and if indeed the mine means well for Zambia's economic development such a move would be the best in trying to seek for a win-win solution," he said.

Mr. Mubanga called on the government to take a deliberate move in trying to ensure that the issue of mining in protected areas was settled.

"Once Copper mining in LZNP is fully-fledged, it will be very easy for the lower Zambezi to be subject to degazetting moving forward because the compromise would have already weakened its initial status as a protected area. What we are trying to curb by halting mining in a protected area is a ferocious challenge that should not be tolerated or even suggested in a landlocked country whose economic development depends on sustainable utilization of the resource within the country," he said.

The CEJ Head of Research said lessons learnt from the situation were that Zambia needed to shift its economic development strategy from mining to other sectors like tourism and agriculture.

"Zambia needs to treat its environment jealously because currently, it is no longer wise to keep on saying that as a nation we are endowed with bountiful natural resources. Our National Parks, forest reserves and marine ecosystems are threatened by several cancers that the current government needs to curb. There was a time we thought Zambia had an abundance of fish in our natural water bodies but where is that fish now?" He questioned.

Mr. Mubanga said Zambia's Game Management Areas (GMA) was thriving with bountiful wildlife but now they are thriving with human settlements. "Wildlife migration is being noticed to take place and this is not happening in favour of Zambia. Wild animals are migrating to our neighboring countries because their habitats are being disturbed in Zambia. Bird sanctuaries are no longer thriving with chirping sounds on the Zambian side as is the case with the Mutulan'ganga Bird Sanctuary," he said.

Mr. Mubanga added that the national forest reserves were also encroached and left with mosaic forest landscapes of bare land and scanty trees.

"CEJ is urging the New Dawn Government to relentlessly pursue democratic governance of natural resources in Zambia and to reconsider the decision that was made by the previous government on the mining in the LZNP through presidential authority," he said.

**Issued By:**

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