

Sunday, Lusaka (February 6, 2022)



PRESS STATEMENT

OVER- EXPLOITATION OF PROTECTED AREAS WORRIES CEJ

CENTRE for Environment Justice -CEJ - Zambia is concerned that protected areas in developing countries are now being over- exploited for financial gains while ignoring the true essence of nature conservancy.

CEJ Head of Research Freeman Mubanga discloses that Climate Change impacts are already proving it difficult for nature conservancy agencies to facilitate the restoration of functional ecosystems.

He has since called on the Zambian government to fulfil conservation commitments to Non-Extraction in protected areas. Mr. Mubanga states that CEJ is therefore, calling on stakeholders not to forget that nature conservation remains the primary aim of protected areas. He adds that the ethical basis of biodiversity conservation is recognised by signatories of the Convention on Biological Diversity, nationally through wildlife protection and protected area legislation, by senior members of all the world's major religions (Palmer and Finlay 2003), and by much of the general public.

Mr. Mubanga says scientific understanding has in recent decades significantly progressed about the critical role of both terrestrial protected areas and marine protected areas (MPAs) for biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of life-support systems on the planet. "The 1994 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines define a protected area as follows: An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means. (IUCN, 1994, p. 7). Nonetheless, in 2008 the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) revised the definition in response to a request from the 2004 World Conservation Congress. The 2008 IUCN-WCPA definition provides: A Protected Area (PA) is a clearly defined geographical space recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal and other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (Dudley, 2008)," he said.

The CEJ Head of Research observed that given the current impacts of climate change on the environment, protected areas are scientifically proven to be significant to preserve not only wild species but also the ecosystems in which species live.

"It has been observed that over the past 25year that it is becoming increasingly challenging for forests, wildlife and nature at large to remain ecologically resilient (i.e., the capacity of an ecosystem to respond to a perturbation or disturbance by resisting damage and recovering quickly). This means that any disturbance to our environment including fires, flooding, windstorms, insect population explosions, and human activities such as deforestation, fracking of the ground for oil extraction, pesticide sprayed in soil, and the introduction of exotic plant or animal species, has an inordinate impact on the restoration of the damage caused and this ultimately robs governments huge financial tolls to facilitate recovery," Mr. Mubanga said.

Issued By:

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