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PRESS STATEMENT

STRENGTHEN WEAK FOREST GOVERNANCE- CEJ URGES

Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) says it is confident that the New Dawn Government will strengthen the historical weak forest governance in the country. CEJ Head of Programmes Ricky Kalaluka states that the New Dawn administration's strong environmental protection approach is important as there is growing pressure on the Forestry Department to fulfill its mandate of ensuring sustainable forest management in the country.

Mr. Kalaluka explains that in recognition of the theme of this year's International Day of Forests which was commemorated on 21st March, 2022 dubbed "Forests and Sustainable production and consumption", CEJ urges government to strengthen the national inter-agency coordination in forest resource management for sustainable production and consumption of forest resources.

He says there has been growing pressure on forests along with fundamental short and long-term national development interests anchored on real estate, energy, mining and agriculture. Mr. Kalaluka has since called on government to ensure departments that impact on progress of sustainable forest management strengthen coordination of their activities.

The CEJ Head of Programmes says inter-departmental coordination is necessary for Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) initiatives are needed to achieve the common goal of sustainable forest management in the country and curb illegal forest activities. "Coordination between various government line departments is also critical in order to address current multiple pressures on Zambia's forest resources and also to take advantage of new opportunities that could support sustainable forest management," he said.

Mr. Kalaluka said many of the pressures had to lie outside the mandate of forest department. "Inadequate inter-sectoral and inter-departmental coordination, overlapping mandates and lack of clarity in executive and judiciary roles tend to contribute to weak forest governance," he said.

The CEJ Head of Programmes observed that lack of intra-and inter-sectoral coordination between sectors tends to contribute to illegal forest activities such as mining and estate development in protected forest areas.

"In the interim, the "New Dawn" administration should critically start looking at how best departments that are mandated to implement the lands policy, mines policy and agriculture policy can best coordinate with the forest department because these agencies have the most impact on the forest sector in the country and also because they influence macro-economic policies, land-use and tenure, energy, environment and infrastructure development," he advised.

Mr. Kalaluka said government needed to ensure that the forest and agriculture departments started to function as a unit in forest resource governance.

"The agriculture department is a vital forest governance link because as demand and agriculture commodity price increases coupled with favorable agribusiness environment and land allocation policies, it triggers forest conversion to agriculture land use," he said.

The CEJ Head of Programmes further stated that inter-department cooperation provided opportunities for Information exchange which was considered valuable in itself because of the insight it provided into other sectors, as they are the main determinants of a broad forest sectoral approach.

"It also permits collaborating department to leverage funds more effectively, which allow them to: coordinate resources, rationalize engagements with local governments and support objectives beyond the scope of the inter-department mechanism," he said.

Issued By:

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