

## Joint Media Statement

**For Release on Monday 13 November 2023**

### **Environmental Defenders, Activists and CSOs Applaud Government's Decision to Uphold Decision on No Mining in the Lower Zambezi National Park**

We, the undersigned, acknowledge and applaud the decision by government through the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MoGEE) to uphold the decision to cancel the decision letter for the proposed large scale mining project in the Lower Zambezi National Park. It is our collective position and view that this decision sets a new precedence pertaining to the exploration of mineral resources in Zambia particularly when mining and extraction of minerals would imply high environmental costs. We therefore acknowledge and echo the Minister's sentiments in emphasizing the need to strike a balance in the management of the country's natural resources.

The public may be aware that since 2014 various actors, including the undersigned and concerned Zambians, played distinct roles to ensure that the 'environmental wrong' to approve and award a mining licence in the Lower Zambezi is redressed. We therefore welcome the Ministry's decision to uphold Zambia Environmental Management Agency's (ZEMA's) decision to cancel the decision letter for Mwembeshi Resources Limited in consideration of the historical perspectives, evidence, and environmental standards in this case.

Recognizing that the Ministry's decision has been received varyingly by stakeholders, the undersigned acknowledge the sentiments of the local communities in Lower Zambezi. Reiterating nonetheless that a resource in one area cannot always be exploited, especially when the risk of possible detriment of the environment is high for current and future generations. Cognizant likewise that mineral resources exploited in other parts of the country have benefitted not just the host communities in those areas but the nation at large.

As the undersigned, We would also like to emphasize the need to de-politicize the decision made by the Ministry to cancel the environmental permission to mine. Particularly given that if it had not been for apparent political interference in 2014, the mining project would not have been approved, considering it had been initially rejected by ZEMA. Moreover, the history of mining in Zambia has for the most part underperformed, delivering more costs than benefits to the people and nature. Thus, the justification that other mines have in the past been allowed to 'pollute' or not comply with the law, as is being argued by contrarians, cannot be used to set the standards for the mining industry and mining projects in Zambia. It is expected that this decision will lead positively to the raising of Environmental, Social and Governance standards in the Mining sector.



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Our position has always been and continues to be that disallowing mining in the Lower Zambezi National Park serves the best interest for the people, ecology, and environment!

On this watershed decision, We also recommend the following:

1. A cancellation and or full withdrawal of the mining licence issued by the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development for the mining project in the Lower Zambezi National Park.
2. Government and stakeholders to engage the people in Luangwa to come up with viable options and proposals to improve the livelihoods in that district in ways that safeguard and leverage the unique ecological and environmental economy of the district.
3. That the government enacts legislation that will prohibit all forms of mining in ecologically sensitive areas. In the meantime, the Ministry of Mines and Minerals Development, should desist from issuing mining licences in ecologically and environmentally sensitive areas such as national parks and other protected areas.
4. Government to review its decision to allow the expansion of mining activities in the Lochinvar National Park in Zambia and other similarly located exploration and mining projects.

*Jointly issued and supported by:*

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