

Wednesday, Lusaka (13<sup>th</sup> March, 2024)



### **CEJ BACKS GOVERNMENT'S STANCE ON UNCONTROLLED BUSH FIRES**

Centre for Environment Justice -CEJ- has backed President Hakainde Hichilema's stance on Bush fires when he declared the prolonged dry spell in the country as a National Disaster and Emergency.

CEJ Executive Director Maggie Mapalo Mwape said the President's statement must be taken seriously especially that it has been repeated by Green Economy and Environment Minister Collins Nzovu that burning a bush is a criminal offence.

Ms Mwape said CEJ at its Environmental Protection Dialogue - EPD2023 Traditional Leaders Caucus discussed forest fires and called for regional dialogues.

She said CEJ is set to commence the regional Traditional Leaders Dialogues starting with North Western this week, followed by Northern, Luapula and the rest of the Country as a build up to the 2024 Traditional Leaders Caucus at the EPD2024.

Ms Mwape said according to Zambia's Constitution, burning of forests, grasslands, rangelands and bushlands is punishable by law.

"The law under the provisions of Section 330 of the Penal Code, Chapter 87 of the laws of Zambia, states "any person who wilfully and unlawfully sets fire to;- (a) a crop of cultivated produce, whether standing, picked or cut or (b) a crop of hay or grass under cultivation, whether natural or indigenous product of the soil or not, and whether standing or cut or (c) any standing trees, saplings or shrubs, whether indigenous or not, under cultivation is guilty of a felony and liable to imprisonment for fourteen years," she said.

Ms Mwape further urged Government to enforce the law by ensuring that anyone found outside the law by starting fires in fields, grasslands, forests, bushlands, rangelands, valleys, and swamps, faces punishment as enshrined in Zambia's Constitution.

Issued By: CEJ Communications Unit

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