

Sunday, Solwezi (17<sup>th</sup> March, 2024)



## **FQM, STAKEHOLDERS ACT TO PROTECT WORLD'S UNIQUE FOREST MAVUNDA ONLY FOUND IN NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE**

First Quantum Minerals -FQM- and other partners have had a Zambian, John Muzenzi, sponsored to undergo training in America as Fire Marshall to control forest/bush fire in Mavunda, a type of Forest only found in Zambia's North Western Province.

Mavunda is unique worldwide because it is a 'Dry Ever Green' Forest scientifically known as Cryptosepalum Forest.

The Forest is where Adamson Bratson Musanda Mushala, a Zambian Insurgent who led a resistance movement against the One-Party Government of President Kenneth Kaunda from 1975 until his death in 1982 was hiding until when he was killed by officers of the Zambia Army.

The Forest covers Chief Ntambu, Sailunga, Chibwika, Sikufele, Chizela and Matebo's chiefdoms.

Senior Operations Manager at West Lunga Conservation Project, John Muzenzi, said the Forest has remained intact because Chiefs protected it for decades, urging youths to protect it for future generations.

Mr. Muzenzi said the Project is working closely with the Government and Traditional Leaders in seven chiefdoms and the community to protect wildlife, rivers and forests.

This came to light at a Traditional Leaders Caucus on Ending Forest Fires, organised by Centre for Environment Justice -CEJ- in Solwezi District, North Western Province.

Mr. Muzenzi said despite the Forest being unique, it can be destroyed by fire outbreaks which President Hakainde Hichilema has spoken strongly against as the law prohibits uncontrolled bush fires.

The Fire Marshall said West Lunga Conservation Project with support from First Quantum Minerals -FQM- observed depletion of the West Lunga National Park and, therefore, increased the number of Community Game Scouts to protect few animals that remained in Game Management Areas.

He disclosed that there were four elephants in West Lunga National Park before the West Lunga Conservation Project but the number has increased to over 100, following combined interventions.

"Elephants that felt threatened by poachers are now migrating from Kafue National Park to West Lunga National Park where they feel safer. The year 2022 recorded unprecedented fire which stakeholders failed to contain in Game Reserves and National Parks threatening biodiversity and human life after killing a 5 year old child. FQM therefore, sent me to America to learn how to control late bush fire to protect biodiversity and human life. West Lunga Conservation Project is now working closely with the Forestry Department and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife in five districts to fight fire through community governance to stop burning forests after August," he said.

Mr. Muzenzi said 31 Community Forest Managements Groups (CFMGs) have been formed working with Government and Traditional Leaders coupled with the formation of 6 Community Resource Boards.

"Community members committed to stopping Bush fires if given Alternative Livelihoods prompting FQM and other stakeholders to assist them with beehives for beekeeping," he said.

Mr. Muzenzi said FQM and the goodwill of other donors also established Community Game Reserves for community ownership and protection of which the number of animals has risen from 178 to over 400 protected in a fence by the community themselves.

"Other donors have built an abattoir in Chief Ntambu's area for all Zambians to access bush meat at an affordable price when communities start harvesting from their Community Game Reserves," he said.

Mr. Muzenzi said while waiting for wild animals to increase before harvesting them in a controlled manner, communities have been assisted with 18 cattle that multiplied to 23, as a source of animal protein.

"We are happy that 2023 was the best year in combating unprescribed bush fire outbreaks due to various interventions," he said.

And Centre for Environment Justice -CEJ- Head of Research and Studies, Freeman Mubanga, called for adoption of technology to monitor forests such as Remote Sensing and Real-time Monitoring Systems like the Global Forest Watch platform.

Among the Chiefs in attendance was Dr. Chief Mumena of Kalumbila District, Senior Chief Sailunga, Chief Kakoma (Representative) as well as Chief Ntambu all from Mwinilunga District.

Others are Chief Lumpuma of Lufwanyama District, Chief Musaka, Chief Mulonga (Representative), Senior Chief Kalilele (Representative) and Chieftainess Chikola of Mushindamo District and Chief Kapijimpanga (Representative) of Solwezi District.

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