

Monday, Solwezi (18<sup>th</sup> March, 2024)



### **KAFUE RIVER SOURCE UNDER THREAT, CHIEF MUSAKA UNHAPPY**

Chief Musaka of Mushindamo District, North Western Province, says foreign nationals have invaded the headwater at the source of the Kafue River, an ecologically sensitive zone.

The Traditional Leader has since appealed to First Quantum Minerals -FQM- and Non-Governmental Organisations -NGOs- like Centre for Environment Justice to consider executing a conservation project as current activities will have long term effects on the sustainability of the Kafue River.

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.

"My Chieftainship is 140 kilometres away from Solwezi sharing the border with Congo DR and Chieftainship Chikola. The source of the Kafue River sits in my Chieftainship at the tip of the border with Congo DR. This place has been invaded by foreigners that are practicing charcoal burning and wood harvesting. If this continues, the Kafue River might dry," he said.

The Traditional Leader said Kafue River is important as it feeds the Copperbelt, Central, Lusaka and Southern Provinces.

"I have tried to appeal several times to certain organisations that visit Musaka Chieftainship to generate a project. I reached out to the corporate world like First Quantum Minerals - FQM and Government but the requests fall on deaf ears. I take this opportunity to ask FQM to come to our rescue because Kafue River is an important ecological footprint," he said.

Chief Musaka said before depletion, the Kafue River Headwater used to host plenty of wildlife.

The Traditional Leader said FQM can execute a project like the one in Chief Ntambu's Area through the West Lunga Conservation Project to restore wildlife and put cattle as an alternative livelihood.

"Do the tourists know that the source of Kafue River is in Musaka Chieftainship? If they knew, they would travel to Musaka Chieftainship to see the source of the Kafue River. If they find

wildlife and good restaurants built by FQM, they would invite their friends to visit the Source of the River," he said.

Chief Musaka said unprescribed bush fire and charcoal production was well controlled between 1956 and 1964 in his Chieftom because the Colonial Rulers were serious in protecting forests.

The Kaonde Chief said charcoal production was concentrated in one area because Colonial Rulers used to issue a 'Pass' or amapaso.

"The Colonial Rulers used to teach people how to cut trees and how they could prepare for them to make sprouts. But this time, it's free for all. The Kipushi Forest Reserve has been depleted. On paper it is a forest but what is a forest without trees because everything is gone. Now that Kipushi Forest Reserve is completely gone, they have moved into the traditional land where they are cutting trees at will," he said.

The Chief said he tried to mount road blocks but failed to control charcoal production and unprescribed bush fire because the land is big.

"Government, corporate world and NGOs should come to our aid because we are ready to work with them. If we had organisations like CEJ earlier, we would have protected the forests like the whites did but after independence, we lost direction. In the past we used to have a group of experts going round to conduct early burning but this time it is free for all. Why can't Government reintroduce that department and employ many workers as possible to contain the situation? Let them do like they did to the Ministry of Education where we used to complain about teachers but they employed more teachers," he said.

Meanwhile, Chieftainess Chikola who borders DRC and Musaka Chieftom said there is need to do more to protect forests.

Dr. Chikola said she has resolved a wrangle where foreigners put beacons in a protected forest in her Chieftom.

"The absence of trees has allowed grass to grow tall thereby acting as dangerous fuel for unprescribed bush fire which spreads to other areas. We saw a child dying while catching rats as bush fire broke out. We did not know about early burning because rainfall ends late as we border Congo DR which receives a lot of rainfall," she said.

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.

Issued By: CEJ Communications Unit

.....  
Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ)

-----  
Plot 269, Off Twin Palm Road, Ibex Hill, Lusaka -Zambia  
Visit CEJ website: <https://cejzambia.org/> and Facebook: <https://facebook.com/cejzambia.org>  
Call: +260 954 713003 / +260 964 244255 / +260 973 389859  
Email: [info@cejzambia.org](mailto:info@cejzambia.org)