

Thursday, Lusaka (18th April, 2024)



CEJ WELCOMES GOVERNMENT BAN ON CORD WOOD PERMITS

Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) has welcomed Green Economy and Environment Minister Collins Nzovu's directive to halt the issuance of Cord Wood Permits for charcoal production in the districts of Itezhi-Tezhi, Mumbwa, and Shibuyunji.

CEJ Executive Director Maggie Mwape said the Minister's action is a commendable step towards mitigating the climate crisis that Zambia is currently facing.

Ms. Mwape, however, said CEJ is keen to understand the criteria used to select the three districts for the ban, as opposed to implementing a country-wide prohibition.

"We believe that a nationwide approach is essential to address the root causes of deforestation and to ensure the protection of our forests in all regions," she said.

The CEJ Executive Director said in light of the ongoing load shedding and energy challenges, her organization also urges the Ministry to provide information on affordable energy alternatives for the Zambian people.

"As the Country moves away from charcoal dependency, it is crucial to explore and invest in renewable energy sources that are sustainable and accessible to all, especially in rural areas where the impact of load shedding is most acute," she said.

Ms Mwape said there is need to conduct a nationwide assessment of tree stock levels to identify other vulnerable districts and extend the ban accordingly.

The Environmental Defender said Zambia needs to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy projects, such as the Shiwang'andu Small Hydropower Plant in Muchinga Province and the solar mini-grid in Mpanta area in Luapula Province, which have shown promising results.

Ms Mwape called for the development of programs that provide alternative livelihoods to communities reliant on charcoal production, thereby reducing the economic incentive for deforestation.

"We must launch educational campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of forests and the benefits of renewable energy. We also need to enhance enforcement of existing forestry laws and increase monitoring to prevent illegal activities. We must involve local communities in decision-making processes and forest management to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards conservation efforts," she said.

The CEJ Executive Director said her organization remains committed to working with the Ministry and other stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of Zambia's natural resources and to build a resilient green economy for the future.

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