

Saturday, Lusaka (27th April, 2024)



GOVERNMENT TO REGULATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERTS, LAUNCHES SR4ER

Ministry of Green Economy and Environment Permanent Secretary Dr. Douty Chibamba says Government will now regulate Environmental Experts under the Environmental Management Act of 2023.

Dr. Chibamba disclosed this when he officially launched a three-year project from 2024 to 2026 'Strengthening the Respect for Environmental Rights in Zambia' (SR4ER) funded by the European Union (EU) to be implemented by Hivos, the Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ), and the Zambia Institute for Environmental Management (ZIEM).

The Senior Government Official said Government will regulate Environmental Experts because some of the people that provide Environmental Consultancy services do not qualify to do the job.

"We are happy to be here for the launch of this project. Two weeks ago, we were on the Copperbelt looking at Copper Value Chains and days ago, we launched the Green Growth Strategy. Later, we launched the Green Nexus by the European Union. Today, we are talking about the strengthening environmental rights. Climate Change and environmental protection are multidisciplinary in nature. On the Government side, we are alive to the multifaceted nature of Climate Change. It is for that reason that our development design is made in such a manner that we work across different stakeholders," he said.

Dr. Chibamba said Government has opened up to all stakeholders as it has an environmental cluster that monitors on the progress of the implementation of environmental sustainability cluster is line with the 8th National Development Plan.

"For example, in our 8th National Development Plan, we have an entire pillar dedicated to environmental sustainability. We have an environmental cluster that monitors on the progress of the implementation of environmental sustainability cluster. That environmental sustainability cluster is chaired by the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment. The most important thing to note on that cluster is that it is made up of different stakeholders from all the line ministries including members from the Civil Society Organizations. That goes to show

that we want to work with everyone because we realize that the problem we are fighting which is climate change is a complicated one," he said.

The Green Economy and Environment Permanent Secretary said Government already has an institutional framework for all projects present and the future initiated by the development sector.

"In terms of institutional framework from the Government side of things, institutional framework is already existing. In this project that we are launching today, we already have an institutional framework through which you can work with us as Government in order to deliver this project. Just some small words of caution. Environmental justice is a very old topic that started way back in America. The issues were them versus us. We know where the Environmental liabilities were mostly domiciled. That conversation is still going on today. This is why we are talking about such efforts to deliver," he said.

Dr. Chibamba said Government has done its part regarding environmental law after refining the Environmental Management Act in 2023 which will also regulate the fees Environmental Experts charge developers.

"On the Government side, in terms of environmental law, we are trying our best. Recently, we amended the Environmental Management Act. We are finalizing the regulations around the Act. There are a number of improvements that we have made in that law. One of which is that going forward, projects are going to be levied based on their Environmental impact. Previously, we used to base the fees for Environmental Impact Assessments based on the size of the investment of the project. If the project was going to invest 20 million, then that project was going to pay more in terms of Environmental assessment fees than a project that was going to invest 1 million. The more polluting the project is going to be the higher the price they are going to pay. Apart from that, the revised law will regulate Environmental Experts. We have had many Environmental violations. Some of the people who provide Environmental Consultancy services do not qualify to do the job. The quality of the Environmental Project Briefs that they submit are of very low standard making it difficult for the Regulator, Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) to assess the projects and give feedback on time. We want the fees that these experts charge developers to be reasonable. Talking about legacy issues. At our level of development, we have some robust legal framework to help us to facilitate development while protecting the environment. If you can see our ambition for economic output, we are looking to increase copper production to 3 million metric tonnes through 2030. This tells us that there is a delicate balance that we have to maintain between rapid economic output and environmental sustainability.

Speaking earlier, European Union (EU) Head of Cooperation, Cladio Bacigalupi, said it is Government's responsibility to protect citizens from environmental exploitation by

corporations and ensure that victims of environmental violations are adequately compensated.

"Exactly two weeks ago, Honourable Minister Nzovu and representatives of many of the institutions present here today joined the EU - Zambia Business Forum EU-Zambia Business Forum on Growing the Copper Industry through green value chains. We discussed about sustainable and green investments, and how to boost value addition, manufacturing and development of industries related to mining. And, very importantly, how to do it in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible, with governance regulations that ensure the new investments bring benefit to communities and people involved," he said.

Mr. Bacigalupi said in Europe, the European Council approved last month the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive which brings a legal liability for companies relating to environmental and human rights violations within their supply chains.

"These new due diligence requirements apply not only to the direct actions of the company, but also to their subsidiaries and supply chain, also outside EU. EU based companies, as well as non-EU companies that conduct a set level of Organisations, Government, private sector and other key environmental actors, including the most vulnerable groups of the society. The buy-in of all partners is essential to ensure lasting results. In 2017, during the 3rd Universal Periodic Review, Zambia accepted a recommendation to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights. Last year, the Ministry of Justice took the leadership of the process to develop such a plan," he said.

The EU Representative is hopeful that the 'Strengthening the Respect for Environmental Rights in Zambia' (SR4ER) funded by the European Union project, together with other initiatives, will provide an impetus to put in place this important framework, in ensuring its coherence and effective enforcement.

CEJ COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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