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CEJ HIGHLIGHTS CHALLENGES IN CRITICAL MINERAL GOVERNANCE, PROPOSES REFORMS

The Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) has identified key challenges in Zambia's governance of critical minerals, calling for urgent reforms to improve policy coordination, legal frameworks, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Speaking during a Dissemination Meeting on Critical Minerals and Land Governance in Zambia, held in Lusaka with support from Climate Compatible Growth (CCG), CEJ Legal Specialist Dr. Lannette Kambole-Chiti outlined major governance issues affecting the sector.

Dr. Chiti cited competing land uses, inadequate legislation, and weak benefit-sharing mechanisms as major challenges, particularly for vulnerable communities.

She highlighted gaps in policy coordination and implementation, as well as complexities arising from the coexistence of statutory and customary land tenure systems.

"These governance weaknesses often result in tenure insecurity, land disputes, and displacement without adequate compensation," she said.

Dr. Chiti emphasized the need for comprehensive legal reforms, improved institutional coordination, and the establishment of an equitable benefit-sharing system to promote sustainable and inclusive governance of Zambia's critical minerals.

Meanwhile, CEJ Head of Research and Studies Freeman Chiwele Mubanga echoed similar concerns, pointing to significant gaps in land and mining governance.

Mr. Mubanga noted that limited public awareness of land rights and legislation, coupled with a complex land acquisition process, contributes to governance challenges.

"Traditional land tenure systems vary by region, and some chiefs allocate land without proper community consultation, leading to land disputes and limited transparency. Additionally, Zambia lacks reliable data on the ratio of state to customary land, and community participation in governance decisions remains minimal," he said.

Mr. Mubanga further explained that foreign investors often bypass standard procedures by leveraging government connections, leading to irregular land allocations.

"At the same time, small-scale miners frequently operate without proper licenses due to financial and regulatory barriers, while mining host communities face displacement without fair compensation," he said.

"Men, women, and youth experience these governance issues differently, with varying levels of impact," he added.

Mr. Mubanga also provided insight into Climate Compatible Growth (CCG), the funder of the research initiative.

"CCG is a priority-driven research and capacity-building programme that promotes investment in sustainable energy and transport systems," he said.

"Funded by UK Aid, the programme was initially launched as a £38 million initiative set to conclude in mid-2025. However, in June 2024, the UK Government announced an additional £57 million in funding, significantly expanding CCG's scope and impact. CCG operates in multiple countries, including Zambia, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, India, Nepal, Laos, and Vietnam, supporting evidence-based policymaking and investment strategies for sustainable economic growth," he said.

The meeting concluded with calls for greater stakeholder collaboration, policy reforms, and stronger institutional oversight to enhance land governance and critical mineral management in Zambia.

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