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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kampala, Uganda

Oil refinery-affected people in court tomorrow
The people hope that their case will be concluded this year

Tomorrow on Friday February 21, 2020, the oil refinery-affected people will appear in court for hearing of their case against government. The case hearing will take place at the Kampala High Court.

The oil refinery-affected people filed the court case against government in March 2014 following government failure to pay them prompt, fair and adequate compensation while acquiring their land beginning in 2012 for an oil refinery that will be located in Kabaale, Hoima.

The above failure by government constituted a violation of Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution which provides for the prompt payment of fair and adequate compensation before government compulsorily acquires citizens' private property.

At the case hearing tomorrow, two refinery-affected government will be cross examined in the morning and afternoon by government's lawyer.

"Court heard our prayer and agreed to fasttrack hearing of the people's case. This is why the case will be heard both in the morning and in the afternoon.

We are happy that court committed to hear the case at a faster pace. The refinery-affected people filed their case in March 2014 before some of them were compensated by government. They had hoped that court would expeditiously decide their case to compel government to pay them adequate compensation before the compensation process was concluded.

However, by 2018 when all the refinery-affected people who are party to the suit had been compensated, court had failed to conclude the people's case. This was unfortunate and a miscarriage of justice. We hope that the people will finally get justice when the case is concluded and the judge orders for payment of adequate compensation for them," Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, the CEO of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) says.

AFIEGO is supporting the oil refinery-affected people in their case.

Since filing of the case, the refinery-affected people including women have had to travel for as many as over 246km to have their case heard.

"Travelling to Kampala has been especially hard for the women. They have to leave their children and homes in the care of others when they come for the case hearings. It is good that court is trying to end the people's suffering especially that of women by hearing their case at a faster rate.

We hope that the judge will stick to her commitment and the case will be concluded this year," Ms. Doreen Namara, AFIEGO's Legal Assistant, says.

During the last case hearing on September 23, 2019, the presiding judge, Lady Justice Cornelia Sabitti, committed to concluding the refinery-affected people's case by March 2020.

Mr. Innocent Tumwebaze, the chairperson of the Oil Refinery Residents' Association (ORRA), notes: "Our case is not only meant for our benefit. It is also for the benefit of other project-affected persons [PAPs]. We want court to rule on matters that are also important for communities that have been affected by the Tilenga, Kingfisher, East African Crude Oil Pipeline [EACOP] and other oil projects."

Among others, the refinery-affected people want court to:

- Declare that the oil refinery compensation process by government violated Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution leading to delayed, unfair and inadequate compensation of the oil refinery-affected people.
- Declare that the use of cut off dates through which PAPs are stopped from using their land for new developments before compensation is unconstitutional.
- Order government to pay adequate and fair compensation to the oil refinery-affected people.

- Order government to formulate regulations for the assessment and payment of compensation as is provided for under section 20 of the 1965 Land Acquisition Act to prevent the delayed compensation and under-compensation of PAPs that partly arises due to lack of the aforementioned regulations.

ENDS

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ABOUT AFIEGO AND ORRA

AFIEGO is a public policy research and advocacy registered non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to influencing energy policies for the common good. AFIEGO promotes rule of law, transparency, and accountability and offers legal services to citizens whose rights are abused in energy projects or processes.

GPF OG is a community-based organisation that brings together oil project-affected communities in the Albertine region to engage various stakeholders for environmental conservation and the protection of oil-affected communities' rights.