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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Kampala & Hoima, Uganda

**OIL REFINERY AFFECTED PEOPLE'S CASE TO BE HEARD TODAY**

The High Court in Hoima will today June 20, 2023 hear a court case that was filed by the oil refinery project-affected persons (PAPs) against the Ugandan government. The hearing will start at 9.00 am.

With support from Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), the oil refinery affected people filed the court case in March 2014. The case was filed following government's failure to pay the affected people prompt, fair and adequate compensation during compulsory acquisition of the people's land.

During today's hearing, the people and AFIEGO hope that the case will be concluded and a date for the ruling set after several unnecessary transfers and adjournments.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2012, the Ugandan government commenced compulsory land acquisition processes to acquire over 29 sq. km of land covering 13 villages in Kabaale parish, Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district. The land acquisition for a planned oil refinery, an international airport and the Kabaale Industrial Area affected over 7,000 people including 3,500 women, 1,500 children and other vulnerable groups.

Government failed to pay prompt, fair and adequate compensation to the affected people. This was confirmed in the 2017 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG). The OAG assessed the implementation of the oil refinery land acquisition and noted that only 4% of the oil refinery affected people were paid within the timeframe that the Ugandan government set for payment of compensation. All the affected people were supposed to have been paid by February 13, 2014 but 96% were not.

The Auditor General (AG) also noted that unapproved compensation rates were used to compensate the affected people and there was a failure to use uniform rates for all the people. This led to several complaints from the affected people about low/inadequate compensation. The AG also noted that the affected people received unfair compensation.

In the case before the High Court, the oil refinery affected people want court to declare that the oil refinery compensation process by government violated Article 26 of the 1995 Ugandan

Constitution, which provides for payment of prompt, fair and adequate compensation during compulsory land acquisition processes.

They also want court to declare that the use of cut-off dates through which affected people are stopped from using their land for new developments before compensation is illegal.

In addition, they want the court to order the government to pay adequate and fair compensation to the oil refinery-affected people.

They also want the court to order the government to formulate regulations for the assessment and payment of compensation as is provided for under Section 20 of the 1965 Land Acquisition Act.

Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, the Chief Executive Officer of AFIEGO, says, “The judiciary’s failure to complete hearing of the oil refinery affected people’s case for over nine years continues to facilitate suffering and injustice with vulnerable people, especially children, women, and the elderly suffering the most. Young girls dropped out of school and ended up in child marriages due to low compensation and delayed justice.”

He adds, “Failure by court to expeditiously hear the oil refinery affected people’s case has also deterred communities affected by the Tilenga and East African Crude Oil Pipeline projects from seeking justice as the people feel that getting justice in Uganda is an arduous process. I hope that the High Court at Hoima will hear the cries of the affected people and ensure that the case is heard and concluded.”

Mr. Innocent Tumwebaze, the chairperson of the Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA), says, “Due to delayed justice, many families have been forced to live in a refugee-like camp at Kyakaboga village, Hoima district. In this camp, the families are facing many problems including smelly toilets, lack of clean water, government’s refusal to build houses for some affected people, increased conflicts between families and other problems. We hope court stands with us by ordering that government compensates us fairly and adequately.”

Ms. Fausta Tumuhairwe, one of the affected people says, “Women are facing unique challenges including domestic violence. Our young daughters are also not safe due to this camp-like setting where men, women, children and others from different families are forced to live on small plots of land. The rate of teenage pregnancies is worrying. The weather here, unlike in the place where we lived before, is also not favourable for agriculture. Court should give us justice.”

\*\*\*\*\* ENDS \*\*\*\*\*

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