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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Kampala, Uganda

### **TILENGA EIA CERTIFICATE CASE HEARING: WITNESS SUMMONS FOR NEMA'S ISAAC G. NTUJU ISSUED**

On Tuesday November 5, 2019, court heard the case through which civil society organisations (CSOs) and youth under the Guild Presidents' Forum on Governance (GPFOG) want the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate of approval for the Tilenga oil project to be cancelled.

The hearing took place at the Kampala High Court and this was the third time that the court case was being heard.

During the hearing, the presiding judge, Justice Henrietta Walayo, ruled that GPFOG's lawyer should cross examine Mr. Isaac G. Ntujju. Mr. Ntujju is the Principal Environmental Inspector on Oil and Gas at the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).

He swore on affidavit on NEMA's behalf through which he denied that NEMA violated laws and committed procedural irregularities during the November 2018 public hearings on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) report for the Tilenga project.

"NEMA's affidavit is couched in untruths and we are going to use the cross examination of Mr. Ntujju to disqualify it. We strongly believe that after the cross-examination, Mr. Ntujju's affidavit will be considered baseless and will be rejected by the High Court.

When this is done, NEMA won't have evidence to show that it did not violate the law during the public hearings on the Tilenga oil project's ESIA," Mr. Allan Bariyo, the youth's lawyer, said after the hearing.

Mr. Ntujju is the only witness that swore an affidavit on NEMA's behalf. Quashing his evidence that was presented through the affidavit would help CSOs and youth win their cases.

“We believe that we will ably quash Mr. Ntuuju’s evidence because though NEMA denies that they did not break the law, it is clear that alongside the PAU, they did.

They appointed a conflicted presiding officer and failed to organise the Tilenga oil project’s public hearings within the mandatory 30 to 45 days. They also denied youth who had applied to make formal presentations an opportunity to do so during the second public hearing on the Tilenga ESIA report in Nwoya district in November 2018.

This was against the provisions of the 1998 EIA Regulations and the 1999 EIA public hearing guidelines. These are questions of law and NEMA cannot escape. We are positive that we will win,” Mr. Bariyo said after the hearing.

The youth and CSOs maintain that they want the EIA certificate of approval for the Tilenga oil project to be cancelled.

“We want court to cancel the Tilenga EIA certificate because the process that led to the certificate being issued in April 2019 was flawed and violated the law,” the GPF OG chairperson, Mr. Yoram Banyenzaki, said after the hearing.

The judge adjourned the case to November 20, 2019. Witness summons to compel Mr. Ntuuju to attend court on November 20, 2019 have been issued.

“We are calling upon the judge to handle the case with urgency. We want the Tilenga EIA certificate to be cancelled without any delays. If it is not, the public shall suffer irreparable damage as oil activities in sensitive ecosystems including Murchison Falls National Park, Lake Albert, Budongo Central Forest Reserve and others will be allowed to continue in the absence of mitigation plans to avoid or at least mitigate the oil risks.

In addition, if the oil activities are allowed to continue amidst violation of laws, the environment will be degraded and livelihoods will be lost. For instance, tourism will be negatively affected and jobs will be lost.

Climate change impacts such as mudslides and floods which have seen children, women and vulnerable people in Kampala, Kasese and the Mt. Elgon region die will also be worsened.

These and other oil impacts explain why all African oil-producing countries continue to suffer the oil curse characterised by civil conflicts and poverty amidst plenty,” AFIEGO’s Mr. Dickens Kamugisha said after the hearing.

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

## Photos



*The lawyer and representatives of the youth in addition to CSOs after the case hearing and during media interviews at the Kampala High Court*

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### **ABOUT AFIEGO AND GPFOG**

**GPFOG** is a youth-led registered organisation comprising of current and former guild presidents and other university leaders. GPFOG's objective is to promote good governance especially in the natural resources sector in Uganda.

**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.