

COALITION OF KASESE WOMEN AND YOUTH CLEAN ENERGY CLUBS, KASESE

May 2, 2019

PETITION TO THE MINISTER OF ENERGY TO DESIST FROM LICENCING OUT NGAJI OIL BLOCK IN THE SECOND LICENCING ROUND DUE IN MAY 2019

1. Introduction

On April 26, 2019, the coalition bringing together civil society organisations (CSOs) and members of Kasese women and youth clean energy clubs held a meeting at the office of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) in Kasese.

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the fact that the Minister of Energy and Mineral Development, Hon. Irene Muloni, informed the country that Uganda will launch a second licensing round for oil blocks on May 8, 2019.

The minister informed the country of the above through a media briefing held on Wednesday April 10, 2019.

The coalition of Kasese women and youth clean energy clubs brings together women and youth clubs in addition to CSOs that are promoting environmental conservation in Kasese through enabling community access to clean energy.

The coalition and its members is opposed to exploitation of dirty energy such as oil in protected areas as this results in environmental degradation, destroys biodiversity, harms community livelihoods through loss of jobs in the fishing and tourism sectors and others.

The coalition and its members therefore campaign against government plans to explore for oil in Lake Edward, a Ramsar site, Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP), a Human and Biosphere Reserve, and other protected areas in Kasese and the Greater Virunga landscape at large.

The information that the coalition gathered is that five exploration blocks including some that were left over from the last competitive licencing round of 2016 will be put up for bidding on May 8, 2019. Ngaji block was one of these blocks. Owing to community, CSO and international pressure, oil companies feared to bid for the block, and rightly so.

Ngaji oil block, which covers Lake Edward and QENP, serves economic, social, cultural and aesthetic purposes that no amount of money from oil exploitation can replace.

Moreover, government is already destroying other critical ecosystems by allowing polluting oil activities in Murchison Falls National Park (MFNP), giving away forest lands to squatters and investors to develop tax centers among others, allowing sand mining and rice growing in lakes and wetlands such as Lwera and others.

After degrading our environment, government issues Ugandans with warnings to prepare for famine such as the one that was issued on April 3, 2019.

This is unacceptable and through this petition, we are calling on the Minister of Energy to desist from putting up Ngaji oil block for bidding.

We are also calling on Members of Parliament (MPs) from Kasese, Rukungiri, Rubirizi, Kanungu, Ibanda, Mitooma and Kamwenge among others to demand that the Ministry of Energy does not put up the oil block for bidding.

We explain why below.

2. Discussion

- a) **Environmental degradation:** Between February 27 and March 1, 2019, CSOs, youth and women belonging to our coalition visited the oil region and interacted with oil-affected communities from Hoima, Buliisa, Kikuube, Nwoya and other districts. Our visit was supported by AFIEGO. The communities we visited told us that massive vegetation clearing for oil infrastructure, development of big roads through eco-sensitive areas such as MFNP and increase in human-wildlife conflict characterise oil exploitation activities. The communities decried the destruction of their environment and those from Nwoya told us that when oil exploration started, more elephants started invading and destroying their gardens. Communities therefore had ill will towards conservation because animals were destroying their crops.
- b) **Rise in charcoal and food trade:** In addition, we were informed that construction of oil roads such as the Hoima Kaiso-Tonya road resulted in increased charcoal trade and therefore tree burning. With increased traffic on the roads comes increasing markets for charcoal. As such, the environment is being destroyed as communities engage in the charcoal trade. We were also informed that due to the rising food market because of an increasing population in the oil region, communities were increasingly exerting pressure on eco-sensitive areas as they seek land to grow food for sale.
- c) **Poor compensation:** We were also informed that communities affected by land acquisitions for an oil refinery, central processing facilities (CPFs), roads and other mega oil infrastructure in Hoima and Buliisa were given low compensation. This did not only result in many community members becoming poorer, it also increases pressure on eco-sensitive areas as poorly compensated communities encroach on protected areas that are not well-policed.
- d) **Fears over loss of fishing jobs:** The fishing communities that we interacted with were fearful that they would lose their fishing jobs due to oil activities on Lake Albert. They said that the lake provides fish and income to the young and old but because of oil activities, communities feared that they would be stopped from using the lake.
- e) **Poorly conducted ESIA:** Communities also informed us that government tells them that it will be able to avoid, minimise or mitigate oil impacts on the environment through conducting and implementing Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) studies. However, communities told us that the conduct of ESIA is ignored as happened in

the oil refinery project, oil activities such as land acquisitions commence before ESIA's are conducted and that community views are largely ignored in ESIA processes. This compromises conservation efforts.

- f) **Oil activities against Paris Climate Change Agreement:** The community testimonies convinced us more than ever that Uganda will not exploit oil without experiencing oil impacts such as environmental degradation, loss of jobs which cannot be replaced by the oil sector, poverty, food insecurity, water scarcity, increased disease burden, loss of cultures, increased marginalisation of women, conflicts and others seen in countries such as Nigeria, Ecuador and others. We resolved to petition you, the Minister of Energy, and our MPs to ensure that Lake Edward and QENP are protected from oil activities.
- g) Moreover, oil activities are against Uganda's Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) on climate change and the Paris Climate Change Agreement that seek to lower carbon emissions to reduce global warming.

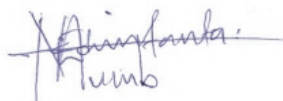
Recommendations

In view of the above, the following should be done:

- (i) We call upon government, through the Minister of Energy, to desist from putting up Ngaji oil block for licencing on May 8, 2019. Enough is enough! The president and his government have severally told Ugandans that they are pro-environmental conservation. In fact, one of the resolutions that the NRM Central Executive Committee (CEC) came up with following a meeting at Chobe Safari Lodge in Nwoya district in February 2019 was that NRM would work for "environmental conservation, as part of a fundamental push to roll back and mitigate the effects of climate change." Exploiting oil is against this resolution. Government should not destroy our environment, contribute to climate change through oil exploitation efforts and then tell us to prepare for famine!
- (ii) Further, MPs from Kasese, Rukungiri, Rubirizi, Kanungu, Mitooma, Ibanda and Kamwenge should demand that the Ministry of Energy does not put up Ngaji oil block for licencing. Oil exploitation should not be allowed in Queen Elizabeth National Park, Lake Edward and other protected areas.
- (iii) In addition, we call upon parliament to ensure that the ongoing amendments to the Land Acquisition Act of 1965 by the Ministry of Lands ensure that compensation challenges are addressed. MPs should make sure that the amended Land Acquisition Act sets stiff penalties for government failure to pay adequate compensation and that the act defines what prompt, fair and adequate compensation is. This will help communities which are suffering because of under-compensation while also reducing pressure exerted on eco-sensitive areas due to under-compensation.

- (iv) Further, Ministry of Water and Environment, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and National Forestry Authority (NFA) among other stakeholders should ensure that the environment is protected amidst oil threats. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries should ensure that fisheries and fishing communities' jobs are protected.
- (v) Government, through the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), should scale up implementation of the 'Free' Electricity Connections Policy (ECP) of 2018. The free connections that communities need are not those that involve being connected to the grid yet they cannot afford to pay hydro-electricity bills. Communities need offgrid solar energy. REA should therefore connect the 1.9 million households and more to offgrid solutions as is aspired to under the ECP. This policy was launched by government in Kasese in August 2018 and its implementation should be scaled up to enable communities get connected to solar. Ministry of Energy should pursue this alternative instead of seeking to exploit oil to ostensibly help Ugandans access modern energy among others.
- (vi) Further, government including the president, Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Water and Environment among other stakeholders must implement commitments made under the Paris Climate Change Agreement and Uganda's NDCs on climate change. Exploiting Uganda's oil resources is against the Paris Climate Change Agreement and Uganda' NDCs whose overall goal is to curb global warming. Citizens and development partners should hold government accountable to implement the Paris Climate Change Agreement and Uganda's NDCs.
- (vii) Finally, development partners should support Uganda to invest in solar projects and to realise lower electricity tariffs to minimise the environmental impacts that arise because of lack of access to clean energy.

Thank you,



The image shows a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Edwin Mumbere'. Below the signature, the name 'Mumbere' is written in a smaller, simpler font.

Mr Edwin Mumbere,
Co-ordinator of coalition of Kasese women and youth clean energy clubs.

CC:

- The President of the Republic of Uganda
- The Speaker of Parliament
- All MPs from Kasese, Rukungiri, Rubirizi, Kanungu, Mitooma, Ibanda and Kamwenge
- The Minister of Water and Environment

- The Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
- The Executive Director, NEMA
- The Executive, NFA