

**AFRICA INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY GOVERNANCE**

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*Received by Amelio  
Rev Susan  
5/7/2023 0777564935*

July 5, 2023

His Grace Stephen Kazimba,  
The Archbishop,  
Church of Uganda (COU),  
Kampala (U).

Dear Your Grace,

**OPEN LETTER TO THE COU ARCHBISHOP AND HOUSE OF BISHOPS: ENGAGE  
GOVERNMENT & OIL COMPANIES TO END OIL SECTOR INJUSTICES**

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Greetings from Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), our undersigned civil society organisation (CSO) partners and oil-affected community leaders.

The undersigned CSOs and community leaders work with communities that have been displaced for the Tilenga, Kingfisher and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) projects to defend their rights. The CSOs and community leaders also defend Ugandans' right to live in a clean and healthy environment.

The undersigned take this opportunity to thank you and the House of Bishops for your visit to the Kabalega Industrial Park, Kingfisher and Tilenga oil project areas on June 29 and 30 respectively.

The undersigned believe that the Church has a great role to play in encouraging development in Uganda, while also promoting justice, especially for the poor whom God loves.

Following your visit to the aforementioned oil project areas, you commended the project developers for the job that they are doing and noted that oil is a blessing in Uganda as it has offered employment to thousands.

Your Grace, we, the undersigned have worked with oil project-affected people for over 11 years, and we are happy to see the Church in Uganda taking a keener interest in oil issues.

We believe that if you speak against the unbrotherly and unjust actions that have been perpetuated against the oil refinery, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil project-affected persons, the people's rights may be restored. Your calls on Uganda to power her economic growth through renewable energy, and not oil, will also serve God's co-creation role for humanity while ensuring that Uganda takes climate action.

## **A. OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of this letter therefore is to share the injustices that Ugandans and especially the oil host communities in over 15 oil-affected districts have continued to suffer because of oil activities in Uganda. We are also humbly requesting that you engage the Ugandan government to prioritise renewable energy over oil and gas exploitation.

## **C. INJUSTICES**

**(a) Displacement of over 7,000 people without fair, adequate and prompt compensation:** Your Grace, during your visit to the Albertine Graben, you visited Kabalega Industrial Park, a place with a terrible past. In 2012, in violation of the laws of Uganda, the government without conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) displaced over 7,000 people including over 3,500 women and 1,500 children from 13 villages in Kabaale, Hoima district. The people were displaced from over 29 square kilometers of land for an oil refinery, a crude export hub, Kabalega International Airport and others. Families were stopped by government from using their land to grow perennial food and cash crops in October 2012 prior to compensation. This resulted in increased poverty, family break downs, children dropping out of school, teenage pregnancies and other injustices. The wounds from the compulsory land acquisition live on to date and several women break down when they recall the pain that was occasioned on them to make way for the Kabalega Industrial Park. To love thy neighbour as one loves oneself is a core tenet of the Christian faith. This tenet wasn't espoused by government during the compulsory land acquisition processes for the Kabalega Industrial Park.

**(b). Forcing people into resettlement camps:** Your Grace, in relation to the above community, government relocated over 70 families into a camp at Kyakaboga village, Hoima district. At the camp, the families live like refugees in their own country with no security for families and young girls, no proper hygiene and no respect for the customs and culture of the different tribes who were confined on plots of land. Men and women who used to live freely in dignity now live in isolation and indignity. All these problems were caused by the government's failure to follow and implement her own 2012 Resettlement Action Plan (RAP), which had assured people that they would never be resettled in special settlements. As religious leaders, we request you to visit this community and engage government to right its wrongs by making the living conditions of the people better.

**(c). Increasing landlessness and food scarcity:** Your Grace, on June 30, 2023, you paid a visit to the Tilenga project area in Buliisa district. After the visit, you noted that you were impressed with the support given to the Tilenga project-affected persons in Avongera village in Buliisa. Just three days before you made these remarks, Tilenga and other oil project-affected people had filed a lawsuit against TotalEnergies in France over the companies' abuse of their land, food and other rights. Your Grace, we have seen single mothers, and even grown men, break down when they speak about the unfair compensation, intimidation, landlessness, food scarcity and other impacts they have suffered because of the Tilenga project. In Micah 6: 8, the Lord calls on us to practice justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. TotalEnergies, whose activities have led to flooding and destruction of communities' gardens in Buliisa, has failed to abide by this principle. We hope that you will engage them so that they correct course.

**(d). Destruction of fishing livelihoods:** Your Grace, the impacts of the Kingfisher project are under-discussed but this does not mean that they do not exist. During your visit to the Kingfisher project site on June 29, 2023, you indicated that you visited the oil drilling rig in Kikuube district. Fisherfolk have complained about this rig, noting that its light has contributed to lower fish catch. The communities that were resettled in a camp-like resettlement owing to the Kingfisher project are also discontented.

**(e). Biodiversity risks:** In the book of Genesis, God charged humanity to be co-creators alongside Him. In this vein, man and woman are supposed to engage in environmental conservation efforts while avoiding destructive activities. Unfortunately, the Tilenga and Kingfisher projects pose grave environmental risks as they are located within Murchison Falls National Park and Lake Albert, two biodiversity hotspots. The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), a related project, is set to affect nearly 2,000sq. km of protected areas, a third of which are home to endangered species such as elephants and chimpanzees. The EACOP is also set to affect wetlands belonging to the Lake Victoria, Lake Albert and Victoria Nile basins. Some of these wetlands, which play important socio-economic roles, are also connected to Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance). The mismanagement of compulsory land acquisition processes for oil projects does not give us hope that the oil project developers will manage the environmental impacts of their projects. Moreover, it is estimated that when burnt, the oil transported by the EACOP will result in the production of over 379 million metric tonnes of carbon over 20 years.

**(f). Worsening national debt:** Uganda's current debt stands at over USD21 billion and the biggest part of this debt has been accumulated between 2012 and 2023. This is the period when government started issuing deadlines for oil exploitation. Government over borrowed to build oil roads, airports, hydro dams and others in the hope to exploit oil and use the revenues to pay back the loans. However, we still insist that oil exploitation is not Uganda's best development pathway at a time when the country and the world at large is struggling with worsening climate change impacts.

**(g). Attacks on civil society and community leaders:** We are sad to inform you that since the discovery of oil, government's attacks on citizens including civil society organisations and community leaders in the oil region have continued to worsen. Government has continued to enact unjust laws such as the Public Order Management Act, the 2016 Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) Act and others to stifle citizens' fight against the negative impacts of oil. Some CSO leaders have been arrested and many CSOs have had their offices vandalised at night and even when they report to police, police has never released any reports. All this impunity is intended to create fear in order for CSOs and community leaders not to question and protect the rights of citizens against oil injustices.

#### **D. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Your Grace, on September 24, 2021, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, three bishops of Mozambique and the Bishop of Namibia were joined by 20 South African bishops to call for the

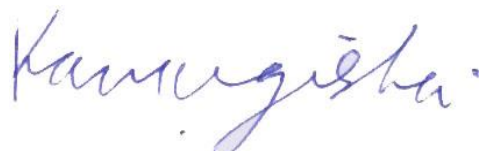
halt to gas and oil exploration in Africa<sup>1</sup>. The archbishop and bishops called on the All-Africa Conference of Churches and the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa to join them in their call.

We join the above in their calls and humbly invite you to do the following:

- i. Advise government to respect her commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change including the need to stop exploitation of fossil fuels such as oil and gas.
- ii. Engage government to promote investments in clean renewable energy for all including off-grid solar.
- iii. Engage Uganda's judiciary to stop injustices caused by delayed hearing of human and environmental rights cases.
- iv. Engage government to stop unsustainable borrowing based on oil speculation.

We request to meet you on July 12, 2023 at 11am or any other time and date of your convenience at your offices to share with you about the suffering of oil affected communities and the dangers of oil in Uganda.

Thank you in advance for accepting our humble letter. May God bless our country.



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Dickens Kamugisha,  
Chief Executive Officer -AFIEGO  
[afiego@afiego.org](mailto:afiego@afiego.org)

## **SIGNATORIES**

1. Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA), Uganda
2. Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), Uganda
3. East African Crude Oil Pipeline-Affected People's Network (EACOP-N), Uganda
4. East African Crude Oil Pipeline Host Communities (EACOPHC), Uganda
5. Center for Environmental Research and Agriculture Innovations (CERAI), Uganda
6. Youth for Green Communities (YGC), Uganda
7. Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda (WoGEM), Uganda
8. Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE), Lwengo, Greater Masaka, Uganda
9. Guild Presidential Forum on Governance (GPFOG), Uganda
10. African Institute for Climate Action and Justice Limited (AFICAAJ), Uganda

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<sup>1</sup> Anglican Bishops Call for an Immediate halt to Gas and Oil Exploration in Africa:  
<https://www.greenanglicans.org/anglican-bishops-call-for-an-immediate-halt-to-gas-and-oil-exploration-in-africa/>

11. Environment Governance Institute (EGI), Uganda
12. Strategic Response for Environmental Conservation, Uganda
13. African Initiative for Food Security and Environment (AIFE), Uganda
14. Buliisa Peace Development Organisation, Uganda
15. Agali Awamu group, Kyotera
16. Be Empowered, Uganda
17. Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment and Management (CECIC), Uganda

## CC

- The Chairperson, Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)
- The Bishop, Bunyoro Kitara Diocese
- The Supreme Mufti
- The Chairperson, National Alliance of Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches of Uganda