



23 August 2020

PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAVE BUGOMA FOREST ACTIVISTS PROTEST THE ISSUANCE OF THE CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT BY NEMA TO HOIMA SUGAR LTD.

1. The undersigned civil society including: NGOs, environmental journalists, activists and members of the public under the umbrella body Save Bugoma Forest Campaign 2020 are protesting against National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) for issuing a certificate of approval for the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) report authorizing Hoima Sugar limited to destroy over 21 square miles of Bugoma forest to plant sugarcane and other activities.
2. According to the ESIA Certificate issued by NEMA dated August 14, 2020 a copy of which we have, NEMA has permitted Hoima Sugar LTD to use 21 sq. miles out of the 22 Sq miles they (Hoima Sugar) leased from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom at 3 billion shillings against the will of NFA the chief custodians of all Natural forests and against the calls by Ugandans.
3. In the ESIA certificate of approval, NEMA has tried to confuse the public that Hoima Sugar Ltd will plant sugarcane on 9.24 sq. miles, establish an urban Centre on 1.206 Sq. miles, establish an eco-tourism center on 1.97 sq. miles and restore forest on 3.13 sq. miles, among other economic activities but based on the way NEMA had facilitated the fraud and violated the laws of Uganda to issue the above certificate, no one should trust NEMA. The certificate of approval will facilitate Hoima Sugar destroy Bugoma forest. The conditions in the certificate are only intended to mislead the public. This is the same NEMA that gave a wrong permit to Lwera sand miners and later resulted into court awarding the degraders over UGX180 billion. Why should Ugandans trust NEMA?
4. As citizens committed to promote conservation of Bugoma forest and the environment generally, we strongly object to the ESIA certificate of approval by NEMA to Hoima sugar Ltd to destroy any part of Bugoma, not even one square mile or an acre. Bugoma forest must be conserved and all degraded areas restored.

5. We want to inform all Ugandans that the Environment and Social Impact Assessment report certificate of approval issued is simply a sugarcoated, well-crafted move smoothed by NEMA to legalize an illegal process to give away and destroy Bugoma forest by Hoima Sugar LTD. It is unfortunate that a government agency can engage in facilitating destruction of a forest amidst worsening impacts of climatic changes in and outside Uganda.
6. More so, it is absurd that NEMA opted to violate all environmental laws governing ESIA processes in Uganda. Among others, they violated the 1998 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, especially regulations:
 - i. Regulation 12: which requires the developer to publically consult the public but the developer did not publicize any consultations.
 - ii. Regulations 19 and 20: NEMA was required to publically call for public comments on the complete ESIA report by Hoima Sugar Ltd but this, they did not.
 - iii. Regulations 21 and 22: which require NEMA to order for a mandatory public hearing/s where a the project in question is controversial. The Hoima Sugar Ltd's Sugarcane project in Bugoma is controversial as there is still a case in court, citizens' petitions to parliament, minister of water and environment, NFA, NEMA, Development partners, such European Union, Dutch Embassy, French Embassy and others.
 - iv. NEMA also violated regulations 24 and 25 regarding how a decision on the ESIA should be made.
 - v. NEMA processed and approved Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA at a time when there is a case in court regarding the same subject matter and therefore NEMA violated the subjudice rule.
7. In view of the above, the ESIA certificate of approval issued by NEMA to Hoima Sugar Ltd must be revoked immediately.

Our demands and plans:

8. It is very clear that NEMA's ESIA certificate of approval to Hoima Sugar Ltd is a product of fraud and it cannot be enforced in any democratic society.
9. We call upon all Ugandans to use their powers as enshrined in article 1 of the Constitution to Save Bugoma forest at all costs.

Specifically, we demand for the following:

- a. NEMA's Executive Director should immediately be interdicted and investigated for engaging and facilitating fraud to destroy Bugoma forest.
- b. Parliament should use its oversight powers to investigate the actions of NEMA, Hoima Sugar Ltd and ministry of lands for issuing land titles in forest reserves, approving ESIA reports in disregarding of national laws and other illegal actions.
- c. If NEMA does not revoke the ESIA certificate of approval to Hoima Sugar Ltd in the next 8 days from today 23 August 2020, we shall organize massive public demonstrations in both Kampala on 2nd September and in Kikube and Hoima districts on 6 September 2020 to express our disappointment against NEMA and government, and to enable the citizens to

take control of Bugoma forest to stop NEMA’s fraud and Hoima Sugar Ltd’s plans to destroy Bugoma forest.

- d. We call on the Sugar Producers Association of Uganda to dissociate themselves from the actions of Hoima Sugar Ltd and commit that they will use their influence to ensure that Hoima Sugar does not destroy Bugoma.
- e. We call upon oil and gas companies to join the campaign to protect Bugoma forest from destruction because this forest is key in absorbing fossil gases that will be produced by oil activities.
- f. We call upon the financiers of Hoima Sugar Ltd to withdraw their funding because this is a dirty investment.
- g. If NEMA does not revoke the certificate of approval to Hoima Sugar Ltd, we shall call upon all Ugandans to boycott sugar from Hoima Sugar Ltd and its associates including Kinyara Sugar.
- h. On Monday, the 24 August 2020, we shall file a case in the High Court of Uganda against NEMA and the Executive Director of NEMA as an individual for issuing the ESIA certificate of approval to Hoima Sugar Ltd to destroy Bugoma forest in total violation of the laws of Uganda.

Importance of Bugoma CFR Bio-diversity.

- i. Bugoma CFR is a tourism hub. Its home to about 600 Chimpanzees’ and contains the highest density of the Nahan’s Francolin and Grey Parrot birds among other endangered bird species.
- ii. It is a migratory corridor for large mammals such as chimps and Elephants connecting to Budongo and Murchison Falls National Park from Queen Elizabeth National Park.
- iii. It’s a western arm of the rift Valley.
- iv. Central in Rain formation, it’s likely the region will be hit by adverse effects of climate change. This is in addition to the loss of soil fertility when the area starts to experience drought which will subsequently affect the factors of production and result into economic crisis in the region and at the household level.
- v. Bugoma is home to several rivers sources that recharge Lake Albert and the surrounding wetlands which act as the breeding grounds for the fish in L. Albert.
- vi. More significantly, Bugoma is centrally located at the heart of the Albertine oil exploration, and mining will soon start. It’s expected that oil explosives and production flares would be absorbed by the forest which acts as the carbon sink. Therefore if depleted, all the pollution will directly be released into space to chock Ugandans.

For God and our country.

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