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NEMA MUST ENFORCE ORDERS ON HOIMA SUGAR LIMITED OVER BUGOMA FOREST DESTRUCTION.

Center for environmental research and agriculture innovations (CERAI) and our partners that work on protection and conservation of nature are calling on NEMA to enforce orders on Hoima sugar limited over Bugoma forest destruction.

On September 27th, 2022, National Environmental management Authority (NEMA) issued a [press statement](#) through which it revealed the deforestation of Bugoma forest natural reserved areas which is contrary to Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) certificate of approval conditions including condition 4.3 (i)(c). And as a result, the area of the natural forest that was supposed to be protected has been severely degraded. In addition, there was deforestation of the eco-tourism site contrary to approval condition 4.3 (i) (c) which has affected the quality of the site for eco-tourism purposes.

Among orders issued by NEMA, Hoima Sugar Ltd was ordered to stop any further deforestation of the natural reserved forest area, ecotourism area, cultural sites and land reserved for urban center adding that sugarcane must be restricted to the area permitted in the certificate. It also indicated that the 312.3ha earlier approved for urban center is halted to be kept as a natural forest in view of the country's efforts to recover forest cover loss.

The above findings by NEMA amount to breach of conditions of approval of NEMA certificate to the company contrary to section 157(f) of the National Environment Act, 2019 and this called off NEMA to issue seven orders to Hoima sugar limited in order to safeguard the environment and avoid any further damage.

It should be remembered that in 2021, CERAI and partners engaged different government institutions including NEMA regarding the rampant destruction of Bugoma forest by Hoima Sugar

Ltd. As you may recall, in January 2021, the save Bugoma Forest campaign (SBFC) GPS images indicated that Hoima Sugar Ltd had cultivated 405 hectares of Bugoma forest land. Sadly, part of the 405 hectares of the forest land that had been destroyed by Hoima Sugar Ltd was that which was approved for ecotourism purposes, and not sugarcane growing.

With our partners we believe that Bugoma forest must be saved at all costs so that the forest continues to play its important roles as a tropical rainforest with ecological, climatological and socio-economic functions. Moreover, the forest is a sanctuary for chimpanzees which must be protected to strengthen tourism in the country. The ongoing activities that are taking place in Bugoma Central Forest Reserve have created more threats to the critical biodiversity and this can only be avoided when NEMA enforces orders it issued over Hoima sugar limited.

Therefore, although CERAI welcomes NEMA's decision, below we highlight our demands that must be considered to protect Bugoma forest from destructive activities.

- (i) NEMA should specify the timeframe under which the degraded forest should be restored and should constitute a multi-stakeholder taskforce comprised of groups such as FSSD, NFA, UWA, Kikuube district local government, civil society and others to monitor the restoration of the degraded forest areas.
- (ii) Hoima Sugar Company should fully involve local communities in the process of restoring the forest and periodically share information on the restoration exercise with the public to build public trust and confidence within the exercise.
- (iii) The indigenous tree species' that were destroyed should be the exact species to be planted and enforcement team should be put on ground to make sure no further destruction happens and ensure that harmonious relationship between communities and security groups exists.
- (iv) Hoima sugar limited should compensate National Forestry Authority (NFA) and Bugoma Host Communities for the lost wildlife that includes death of forest elephant and chimpanzees that died due to encroachment and destruction of their eco-system. This penalty when imposed on Hoima Sugar Limited will act as an example to other companies that are working within the sensitive protected areas.
- (v) The recent Bugoma forest boundary opening survey report by government should urgently be made public
- (vi) Finally, government should investigate and punish NEMA for failure to ensure regular monitoring for compliance with ESIA conditions such as the one for the Kyangwali Mixed Land Use project. From 2020 when HSL's project was approved and commenced, NEMA

made her first inspection in September 2022. NEMA also failed to respond to evidence presented by groups such as the SBFC which indicated that in 2021, HSL had already started violating the ESIA certificate conditions

CERAI and our partners reiterate the need to protect and restore the degraded part of forest without any further delay.

For more information, contact

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