



PRESS STATEMENT

MINING LICENSE APPLICATION IN HWANGE NATIONAL PARK THREATENS ECOLOGICAL BALANCE AND TOURISM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harare, 25 February 2025

The Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) strongly opposes the application by Sunny Ye Feng (Pvt) Ltd for a special mining license in the Bumbusi Ruins area of Hwange, as outlined in the Exclusive Prospective Order No. 04 of 2021. We have formally submitted our objection to the Mining Affairs Board, highlighting that mining activities in this area would disrupt the tourism sector, diminish public confidence, and threaten the long-term sustainability of these protected regions. The applicant's history of environmental violations, including a recent shutdown order by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) for environmental pollution, raises serious concerns about their ability to operate responsibly. Notably, the applicant has faced multiple project closures due to similar violations, with the most recent instance being a shut-down order issued by EMA on 15 August 2020 after failing to comply with an earlier order on 5 August 2020. Given this history, it is troubling to consider the initiation of any new environmentally sensitive projects by this applicant.

Granting this mining license would have severe environmental and socio-economic consequences for Hwange National Park's Sinamatela and neighboring safari areas. The proposed mining activities would disrupt the tourism industry, undermine the park's integrity, and threaten its role as a sanctuary for nature and sustainable tourism. Moreover, archaeological sites such as the Bumbusi National Ruins, which are vital to Zimbabwe's cultural heritage and history, risk being vandalized. The proposed activity will harm Zimbabwe's reputation as a prime tourist destination, endangering thousands of jobs dependent on the sector.

The negative impacts of mining in protected areas are well-documented and include:

- Potential chemical pollution of aquatic ecosystems, if processing is not managed properly.
- Disruption of wildlife movement patterns and dispersal, thereby affecting their reproduction cycles and behavior.

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- Deforestation and land degradation leading to serious damage to local ecosystems
- Increased poaching and the proliferation of illegal wildlife trade.

In September 2020, the government banned mining activities in all wildlife parks and game reserves in response to pressure from conservationists and environmentalists. We raised similar concerns at that time, and the situation remains unchanged. If coal exploration proceeds at this site, it will transform a pristine environment into an area marked by drilling, land clearing, road construction, and geological surveys.

Rather than relying on statements, the government must take decisive action by reforming the Mines and Minerals Act and the Parks and Wildlife Act to prohibit mining exploration and other ecologically harmful activities. While we expected progress on the promised steps to revoke all mining titles within national parks, we are disappointed that no tangible action has been taken thus far.

CNRG calls on the Mining Affairs Board to carefully consider the long-term consequences of this application and to prioritize the preservation of Zimbabwe's valuable ecosystems and natural resources. We urge that the application be rejected to safeguard the environment, support sustainable tourism, and protect the well-being of future generations.

We recommend the government focus on the following actions:

- *Prioritize environmental protection:* Protect Zimbabwe's ecosystems and natural resources by limiting mining activities that damage the environment.
- *Reform mining laws:* Revise the Mines and Minerals Act and the Parks and Wildlife Act to prohibit any mining exploration or activities that threaten the environment.
- *Protect tourism and conservation efforts:* Foster responsible tourism that supports local communities and conservation, rather than allowing mining that undermines these efforts.
- Deny the special mining license application

CNRG urges the Mining Affairs Board to reject Sunny Ye Feng (Pvt) Ltd's application due to its potentially catastrophic environmental and socio-economic consequences.

End of Statement

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