



PRESS STATEMENT

ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY, CNRG CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION AGAINST POLLUTION AND DESTRUCTIVE MINING IN ZIMBABWE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harare, 05 June 2025

The Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) joins the global community in commemorating World Environment Day 2025, which shines a spotlight on the urgent need to tackle plastic pollution and rethink humanity's relationship with the natural environment.

This year's theme, 'Beat Plastic Pollution,' is a critical reminder of the growing scientific evidence on the devastating impacts of plastic pollution. It also reinforces the international commitment made in 2022 toward a binding global plastic pollution treaty, aimed at ending plastic pollution for good.

In Zimbabwe, however, the day also presents an opportunity to reflect on a deepening environmental crisis that goes beyond plastic waste. Our country continues to suffer from rampant environmental degradation driven by unregulated and destructive mining activities, poor enforcement of environmental regulations, and weak governance systems.

Despite the existence of environmental laws and policies, Zimbabwe faces a major gap in enforcement and implementation. The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) remains under-resourced and constrained in executing its mandate. Meanwhile, mining companies, including those operating without valid permits, continue to violate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations with impunity.

CNRG expresses concern about the increasing instances of pollution, land degradation, deforestation, and water contamination, particularly affecting mineral-rich rural communities. Pollution is closely tied to the rapid growth of unregulated and environmentally harmful mining practices, many of which function outside formal oversight systems. This crisis has escalated to such an alarming extent that it has garnered public attention. The Minister of Mines and Minerals Development, Winston Chitando, recently expressed concern over the environmental damage caused by uncontrolled mining throughout the country.

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The proliferation of alluvial mining activities, particularly for gold and chrome, has led to devastating environmental consequences. Mercury, cyanide, and other toxic substances have contaminated rivers and streams, while open pits, tailings dumps, and chemical leaks have degraded land quality. Widespread river siltation and pollution have resulted from the use of mercury and cyanide in illegal and small-scale mining operations.

These activities have caused significant deforestation, land degradation, and contamination of critical water sources. Abandoned mine sites have been left unrehabilitated, posing serious long-term health hazards and ecological risks. Furthermore, the pollution of water bodies exacerbates climate vulnerability, reducing communities' resilience to drought and threatening their livelihoods dependent on rivers.

We reiterate the urgent need for Zimbabwe to integrate and enforce Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards across all sectors, particularly the extractive industries. Without robust ESG frameworks, the cost of ecological damage will continue to fall on poor communities, women, and future generations.

CNRG calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to:

- Immediately halt mining activities taking place without approved EIAs and permits.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in the issuance of mining licenses.
- Strengthen and adequately fund the Environmental Management Agency (EMA).
- Mainstream ESG standards into national development planning.
- Fully align domestic environmental governance with global frameworks, including the Global Plastic Pollution Treaty under negotiation.

World Environment Day is not only a day of reflection but also a call to action. We must move beyond rhetoric to real environmental justice, where communities are protected, ecosystems are restored, and polluters are held accountable.

As we mark World Environment Day, Zimbabwe must stop treating environmental concerns as peripheral. Pollution from mining is not only an ecological issue, but also a governance, justice, and public health emergency. Let this day be a turning point to embrace sustainable, inclusive, and rights-based environmental governance.

End of Statement

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