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Press Release

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GOVERNMENT MUST CANCEL MINING IN THE LOWER ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK.

The economy of Zambia depends heavily on mining of Copper and other minerals. Generally speaking, mining provides revenues to the government through taxes and contributes to the development of the country through job creation and infrastructure development. Despite these economic contributions, the mining industry has also brought the problem of environmental degradation. Environmental impacts from mining operations are significant and quite often severe, especially in developing nations which lack adequate management of the sector. The main environmental problems associated with mines in Zambia are air, soil and water pollution, geotechnical issues and land degradation. The JCTR notes with sadness that the High Court of Zambia has ruled that the controversial Kangaluwi open-cast copper mine project must go ahead in the heart of the Lower Zambezi National park. The site of the mine is between two seasonal rivers which flow directly into the Zambezi River. In the same vein, the mine's tailings dams will be located just a few hundred meters above the valley floor, next to these rivers. The risk of pollution and collateral damage to the environment is high, as is the impact the mine will have on the wildlife in the area.

Pope Francis in his environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si* has encouraged us to care for our common home the "Environment". We live in a world radiant with beauty and one that is also crying out for redemption. The entire Creation is filled with the beauty and colors of the seasons of creation, at the same time it is groaning under the impact of climate change: extreme weather events, devastating floods and severe droughts, rising sea levels and melting glaciers, disappearing habitats, and disappearing species of life. But this drama is not confined to the climate alone as in recent decades transnational mining companies from North America, Europe, Australia and China have tripled their investments throughout the world, wreaking havoc on the environment and indigenous communities as well.

The JCTR is concerned with this type of development in the lower Zambezi national park as it is not sustainable and a danger to the eco-system, biodiversity and the entire environmental wellbeing. The center is saddened at the fact that despite the effects of climate change being so evident and affecting the livelihoods of citizens with devastating impact on national economy, incidences of environmental damage have continued to rise. The importance of the Lower Zambezi National Park cannot be overemphasized. The park covers a large stretch of wilderness area along the north-eastern bank of the Zambezi River known for abundant wildlife and other natural resources. By allowing mining activities to commence in such a habitat, we risk compromising the rich ecosystem that is home to a variety of fauna and flora. In 2013 the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) rejected the application by Mwembeshi Resources limited to mine in Lower Zambezi National Park, however the mine appealed their rejection to government who then approved the application by overturning ZEMA decision, an indication of disregard of professional bodies' decisions by politicians who in most cases are not qualified in that field. There is need to protect and promote the integrity of our institutions.

In this regard the JCTR is appealing to the Government of Zambia to immediately cancel the Mining license in the Lower Zambezi National park, protect the country's environmental well-being and the future inheritance of generations to come. Additionally, the decision by the court now casts uncertainty

on the tourism industry and small-scale entrepreneurs in the national park as Mwembeshi Resources Limited would go ahead with its large-scale mining activities in the centre of the park. Furthermore, there is need to revise and strengthen the environmental management Act so as to care and protect our environment for such occurrences in future.

**For more information, contact the Social and Economic Development Programme of
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Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR)

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Statements

Advocacy on Environmental Management Policies

2019-11-04

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