



PRESS RELEASE

"WWF-Zambia Calls for Stronger Mining Regulations to Protect Water Bodies and Livelihoods"

Lusaka, Wednesday, 5th March 2025: - As a conservation organization championing environmental protection, WWF-Zambia has commended government on the quick and decisive action taken following the pollution incident that occurred on 18th February, 2025 on the Mwambashi River after the failure of the Sino Metals tailings dam which subsequently polluted the Kafue River downstream.

WWF-Zambia further wishes to commend the government on the subsequent closure of Rongxing Investments mine following the discovery of their pollution of the Lumangwe Stream which has been going on for a couple of months with no action taken by authorities, despite community stakeholders lodging formal complaints to relevant authorities. The multisectoral approach adopted in responding to this unfortunate incident demonstrates the government's commitment to assessing the damage caused by the pollution.

WWF Zambia expects the government to act as prescribed in **Section 149 of the Water Resources Management Act, No. 11 of 2011**. In the event of a spillage of toxic substances, the responsibility of remedying the situation shall be with the party responsible. Therefore, Sino Metals must bear the full costs of damaging the environment and should appropriately compensate the over 200 farmers whose crops and livelihoods have been affected.

Furthermore, WWF-Zambia is concerned with the increasing number of cases of pollution that have been recorded in the recent past from mining activities across the country, and views this as a testament to the weak enforcement and oversight by respective mandated institutions despite policies and legislation in place such as the **Mines and Minerals Development Act No. 11 of 2015**, which provides for safety, health and environmental protection in mining operations. WWF-Zambia believes this is what has led to low adherence and compliance to set environmental and water resources management and protection laws and safeguards.

WWF Zambia Country Director Nalucha Nganga-Ziba states *"WWF emphasizes that the spillages have caused significant environmental damage, affecting vital ecosystems and the livelihoods of local communities and businesses dependent on the waterbodies. The incidents are a catastrophic failure that are entirely preventable, and it must be noted that severely polluting these essential water sources, pose immediate and long-term threats to the ecosystem and the people who depend on it. WWF is calling for*

stricter regulations on industrial effluent management, more frequent water quality monitoring, and better waste management practices, emphasizing that immediate action is necessary to mitigate the pollution's effects, which require the full involvement of the mining company, in line with the Polluter Pays Principle. WWF is also calling on the government and relevant stakeholders to ensure that water quality meets WHO drinking water standards, and that the supply of clean water, particularly to peri-urban communities, should be sustained until their water sources and wells are confirmed to be safe."

Mrs. Ziba said *"Economic growth must be pursued alongside robust preventive measures to avoid incidents like this. WWF urges both the government and mining companies to prioritize sustainable practices and invest in infrastructure and technologies that reduce environmental risks"*.

With the foregoing, WWF wishes to recommend the following measures:

- Conduct a comprehensive study to determine the extent and severity of the environmental and social damages caused by the spill of the tailings dam and institute remedial compensation and environmental remediation actions to be undertaken by Sino Mine for the medium and long term as is being done currently.
- Increased funding to WARMA, ZEMA and the Mines Safety Departments to effectively carry out their regulatory monitoring functions without financial challenges and limited manpower.
- That a thorough audit be carried out on all Tailings dams for all mining activities in order to avoid such incidences occurring again. These should be carried out in consultation with the Engineering Institution of Zambia.
- ZEMA to carry out urgent environmental audits of all mining entities that have been issued with restoration orders and Mines found in violation must cease operations and first carry out corrective measures and additionally be penalized.
- WARMA should update the nation on the status of the pollution of the Kafue River following the pollution through its continued water quality monitoring of all mining operations in the affected area. .

WWF commits to support this process through;

- Support for the ecosystem loss assessments of the damage
- Collaborating with mandated institutions for natural resources management such as Department of national parks and Wildlife, Department of Fisheries, Department of Water Resources Development, Water Resources Management Authority and Zambia Environmental Agency in monitoring the impacts of the spill and providing early warning to affected communities
- Support policy and legislation to enhancing ecological resources management
- Support towards the development of guidelines for the construction of Tailings Dams in order to strengthen enforcement

- Mobilize citizens in affected communities to undertake long term monitoring of underground and surface water through citizen science

Furthermore, WWF-Zambia has called for the need to foster a culture of vigilance, responsibility, and sustainable practices in the mining sector, in order to reduce the risks linked to mining and protect the health and well-being of local communities and the environment.

WWF-Zambia stresses that the t recent devastating incidents affecting the country's largest economic sector should act as a driving force for comprehensive reforms within Zambia's mining industry. These changes must prioritize safety, environmental protection, and the adoption of best practices in mining operations.

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About World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

The World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is the world's leading independent conservation organization with a global network in over 100 countries. Our mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature. We have been working in Zambia since 1962 organizing our efforts across Freshwater, Wildlife, Forests and People.