



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Ugandan CSOs call for action to stop degradation of Ramsar Wetlands due to oil activities

Kampala, Uganda - Fifteen (15) Ugandan environmental and human rights civil society organisations (CSOs) have come together to call for the protection of Ramsar wetlands from degradation due to the ongoing oil and gas exploitation activities in Uganda.

In a February 15, 2023 letter addressed to the chairperson of Uganda's Ramsar Wetlands Committee, the CSOs expressed concern about the impact oil and gas exploitation activities are set to have on Uganda's Ramsar wetlands. These impacts could affect local communities, fisheries, tourism operators, and biodiversity conservation.

In compliance with Article 3 (1) of the 1971 Ramsar Convention to which Uganda is a signatory, the CSOs are therefore calling on the chairperson of Uganda's Ramsar Committee to engage the Ugandan President, Minister of Energy and Mineral Development, Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) and the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) to stop all the oil activities that are affecting or could affect Ramsar wetlands in Uganda.

The CSOs are also calling on the chairperson of Uganda's Ramsar Committee to engage TotalEnergies and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) to stop any oil activities in Ramsar sites.

"Under TotalEnergies' Tilenga oil project, the company intends to extract oil from over 400 oil wells, including 130 within Murchison Falls National Park. The company, whose partners on the project include CNOOC and the Ugandan government, also intends to develop infrastructure such as well pads, a water abstraction station, a central processing facility, flow lines, and various oil pipelines, including one that will be buried under River Nile," the letter reads.

It adds, “The pipeline to be constructed under River Nile is referred to as the Victoria Nile Crossing in the Tilenga oil project’s Environmental and Social Impact Assessment [ESIA] report. Information in the Tilenga ESIA report indicates that construction activities for the pipeline will be located within the boundary of the Murchison Falls–Albert Delta Wetland System, a Ramsar site.”

Experts who reviewed the Tilenga ESIA report also noted that the ferry crossing on Lake Albert and two Tilenga well pads, JBR ten and four, will affect or are close to the Ramsar site.

The Tilenga ESIA notes that the “Potential impacts to the Murchison Falls–Albert Delta Wetland System ...were assessed to be High Adverse to Critical for all project phases.” These phases include the construction, operational and others.

“The Murchison Falls-Albert Delta Wetland System lies within the Lake Albert Basin and falls almost entirely within the boundaries of Murchison Falls National Park. The Ramsar site stretches from the top of Murchison Falls to the delta at its confluence with Lake Albert. The Ramsar Site, which has been proposed to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is important for Uganda’s fisheries, tourism, biodiversity conservation and food security,” the CSOs’ letter reads.

They, therefore, call on the Ugandan government to take action to protect the Ramsar wetland from degradation by TotalEnergies’ oil and gas exploitation activities. The CSOs are also calling on the chairperson of Uganda’s Ramsar Wetlands Committee to work with the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and PAU to provide a list of wetlands belonging to Lake Victoria that have been affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP).

The CSOs’ letter reads, “We are also concerned about the ... EACOP project and its potential impact on wetlands belonging to Lake Victoria. The lake is home to Ramsar wetlands, including Lutembe Bay (LTB), Mabamba Bay Wetland System (MBB), Nabajjuzi Wetland System (NBJ) and Sango Bay-Musambwa Island-Kagera Wetland System (SAMUKA).

The EACOP ESIA report is silent on which wetlands belonging to Lake Victoria have been affected by the EACOP project, leading to speculation that the aforementioned Ramsar sites stand to be affected.”

**ENDS**

Contact: Diana Nabiruma  
Senior Communications Officer, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)  
[dnabiruma@afiego.org](mailto:dnabiruma@afiego.org)