

Green Scenery

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The Country's Natural Resources Are Nature's Gift To Us What We Make Of Them Are Our Gift To Posterity

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

GREEN SCENERY FROWNS ON THE AFRICAN MINERALS AGREEMENT

Green Scenery has read with utter dismay the many articles in the African Minerals Limited (AML) Agreement that are against Sierra Leone's Mines and Minerals Law of 2009. This agreement already approved by Cabinet and is lead before Parliament, follows the unpopular London Mining Agreement that was passed into law by parliament in December 2009.

Many academic literatures have referred to Sierra Leone as a state enmeshed in the "Resource Curse" phenomenon. This is simply because Sierra Leone's governments have made little effort to maximize revenues from its natural resource wealth which are considered globally strategic. In the phrasing of African Minerals, "the 2009 exploration ... confirmed Tonkolili to be one of the largest reported magnetite Iron Ore projects in the world." This is establishing that like Sierra Leone's Titanium, Bauxite and diamonds, the iron ore is a further addition to the list of world strategic minerals in Sierra Leone. Sadly, the country continues to lose out on its mineral wealth and remains principally at the bottom of the human development index.

Green Scenery is concerned that while AML is claiming to be "a leader in innovation and a significant achiever of environmental enhancement and sustainability of the Earth's resources" it has flouted environmental procedures, hence the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act 2008 of Sierra Leone.

The Law (EPA) requires in section 23 (1) that: Except as otherwise provided in this Act and notwithstanding the provisions of any enactment, no person shall undertake or cause to be undertaken any of the projects set out in the First Schedule unless he holds a valid licence in respect of such project. In **Section 27 (1)** the law further states: The Agency shall, after receiving an environmental impact assessment, circulate it to professional bodies or associations, Government Ministries and non-governmental organisations for their comments. (2) Without prejudice to subsection (1), the Agency shall open the environmental impact assessment for public inspection and comments and shall give notice to that effect in two consecutive issues of the *Gazette* and two issues in a newspaper, except that in the case of a newspaper there shall be an interval of at least seven days between the first and second publications.

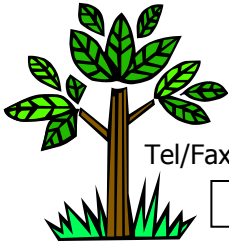
3) Comments made under this section shall be submitted within fourteen days of the last publication in the *Gazette* or newspaper as the case may be, to the Executive Director.

These procedures have not been followed to acquire a valid environmental licence that should legalize the company's status to sign a agreement with government.

Article 13 of the AML agreement allows the company to return mining spoils to rivers or streams used by the company for their operations provided they are not poisonous or noxious matters. This is unacceptable and goes against the spirit of section 114 of the MMA.

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The fact that African minerals will be returning mining spoils into rivers or streams means that it will be returning foreign matter, which can be cumulatively dangerous or an inconvenience to other water users due to turbidity or heavy discharge of particulates. Therefore, AML should define in the agreement the type of mining spoils it will be returning to rivers or streams. Furthermore, AML should oblige itself to undertake a comprehensive study of the hydrologic conditions of water bodies it will be utilizing, and this should form a reference in AML's EIA/SIA.

Green Scenery calls on

- President as a champion of environmental protection to demand that all required environmental precaution are regularized before he appends his approval of the AML agreement
- Parliament to demand evidence of the procedure followed by AML to acquire a valid environmental licence
- The Minister to recall the AML agreement and set right the critical issues around Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan
- The international community to ensure that mining companies follow legal procedures to signing mining agreements.

END

For further information contact: Executive Director on Tel: 076 601979/ 226216.