

## Joint Statement on Special Mining Grants in Hwange National Park from the Stakeholders of Hwange to President Mnangagwa

On September 3rd, 2020 the Hwange Area Stakeholders held an emergency meeting to discuss our concerns about Mining in Hwange National Park. This video serves as the minutes for the Stakeholders Meeting: <https://explorehwange.com/mining-in-hwange-national-park/>

It has been widely reported that the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority rangers arrested Chinese nationals found to be undertaking mining explorations within Hwange National Park. The same Chinese miners have since reappeared in the Park with a Special Grant for mining explorations.

We have been advised that in our country, Special Mining Grants cannot be issued without the approval of the President of Zimbabwe, thus, as an outcome of our Stakeholder's Meeting, we hereby present a joint statement appealing to you, President Mnangagwa to reverse all Special Grants that have been issued by you for areas within Hwange National Park. Chinese companies are reportedly already cutting down mature teak trees and clearing crucial wildlife habitat to make way for their mining activities within Hwange National Park. A map of the known areas affected is available should you wish to review it.

We have also since obtained documentation which indicates that SustiGlobal was commissioned by Afrochine Smelting P/L, a subsidiary of the Tsingashan Group of China (Pvt) Ltd in relation to a proposed coal exploration project located in Hwange, after Sinamatella Camp in the vicinity of Deteema Dam and Masuma Dam. The project scope involves opening of access roads, land clearing, geophysical and geochemical prospecting as well as drilling. A Special Mining Grant (SG7263) was issued to Afrochine Energy.

Similarly, Zhongxin Coal Mining Group received a Special Mining Grant (SG5756) and engaged SustiGlobal with a focus on coal exploration that would entail land clearing, opening of access roads, geophysical and geochemical prospecting as well as drilling along the road to Sinamatella Camp in the Deka Safari Area.

During our Stakeholder's Meeting, it was ascertained that none of the Stakeholders in our region were contacted or engaged for consultation purposes prior to the issuance of these two Special Mining Grants. We therefore also wish to know what other Special Mining Grants have been issued for mining activities within Hwange National Park, and out of concern, we as the Hwange area Stakeholders wish to advice you, President Mnangagwa, of the following consequences expected as a direct result of the issuance of Special Mining Grants in Hwange National Park:

### **Tourism (domestic and international)**

- The Zimbabwe National Parks are the bedrock of tourism. At present, Hwange National Park is one of Africa's most unspoiled tourist destinations attracting tourists from around the globe. In response to news that you will be potentially converting the Park to a mine, people from around the world are already wondering what is next for mining in Zimbabwe and if all National Parks including the Victoria Falls will be offered to the Chinese for mining.



- Travel agents and tourists will cancel their travel itineraries and tours scheduled to arrive in Hwange National Park and will seek alternative destinations in other countries.
- Hwange is a feeder destination to other tourism attractions within Zimbabwe such as Mana Pools, Binga, Msuna, Matopos, Chimanimani, Great Zimbabwe. Mining in Hwange National Park will therefore result in a significant reduction of tourists traveling to any part of Zimbabwe.
- Hwange National Park and other Parks in Zimbabwe will no longer be viable or sustainable destinations for tourism since all investment will likely be withdrawn and tourists will not pay Park entry fees to see Parks where mining activities are underway.
- Special Mining Grants were issued for concessions in areas that already had been allocated to other safari operators who have invested millions of dollars in tourism infrastructure. Lawsuits will ensue, seeking compensation for losses due to mining operations.
- Every safari camp, tour operator and activity provider will likely lose their business as a direct result of mining in Hwange National Park.
- The repercussions are far reaching as safari lodges and domestic tourism operators are not the only ones who will lose their livelihoods to mining operations in Hwange National Park - booking agents and travel agents both locally and internationally, ground transfer companies, lodge employees, safari guides, training institutions, car rental companies, fuel suppliers, banks, philanthropic groups, airlines, suppliers of tourism related goods, food supply chains, grocery stores, artisans, students, research organizations, immigration and others will be all be affected. Not to mention the investors who have put their faith in Zimbabwe being “Open for Business”.

## Environment

- Hwange National Park has historically faced severe shortage of water supply. Mining activities will place a further strain on an already low water table which means less water will be available for the wildlife who are the voiceless stakeholders and victims of the Special Mining Grants.
- River systems originating from the affected areas stretch all the way down the Zambezi will face contamination due to the polluting effects of mining in Hwange National Park.
- Existing within a 60-kilometers stretch running through Hwange are 7 active mining operations. There is enough coal outside of Hwange National Park and other protected areas and no cause for coal mining for coal mining activities to be sought within and of Zimbabwe’s National Parks.
- For more than 15 years key stakeholders have assisted Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority in many ways. The most significant has been managing the provision of water to the pans / waterholes within our National Parks. In recent years they have largely been responsible for the conversion from diesel engines, using fossil fuel, to clean and sustainable solar energy which were deemed necessary for both economic and environmental reasons.
- The over utilization of fossil fuels is contributing to global warming. There is no need to mine coal when there are cleaner renewable sources of energy. Zimbabwe could be a leader in looking at renewable sources of energy as opposed to relying on open cast coal mining and this would put us in good stead in terms of reputation as a destination that cares about conservation of the environment, which is important to global travelers.
- The Hwange/Victoria Falls area is classed as one of the world’s best solar irradiation areas in the world. The potential for harnessing solar power as renewable energy holds great potential and would position Zimbabwe as an innovative, environmentally conscious leader driving new advances in renewable power sources that safeguarding the environment.



## Wildlife and Conservation

- Conservation related funding currently being directed to Hwange National Park and other Parks throughout Zimbabwe will likely to be cancelled or withdrawn by international conservation partners and other donors from around the world.
- The Sinamatella section of Hwange National Park, an area threatened by Special Grants, represents the only habitat with Black Rhino in the whole of the Matabeleland North province and provides a vital safe haven for these and other endangered and specially protected animals
- Other endangered species in the area include the pangolin and the Painted Dogs which draw global interest in conservation and tourism for Zimbabwe.
- Ivory and rhino poaching will increase in Hwange National Park with the presence of mining operations within the Park.
- The areas targeted for mining within Hwange National Park are also the areas with the most and reliable water drinking points for wildlife, from the Deka river system, Mandabvu dam, Masuma Pan, Shumba Pan, Lukosi River into main Camp Invelo area and to Deteema in Robins and possibly Dollilo.
- The National Parks of Zimbabwe were proclaimed principally as Sanctuaries for the benefit of wildlife. Hwange National Park (NHP) is one such sanctuary situated in a strategic, central, position in the region and is critical to the success of the KAZA Transfrontier Area (KAZA TFCA). Any mining, particularly coal, would pollute and destroy the habitat and rivers thus rendering surrounding areas uninhabitable as far as animals are concerned. This would have an adverse effect on the region and substantially reduce the wildlife domain.
- Mining activities within Hwange National Park will have an inevitable impact on the Hwange-Chobe-Kazuma Wildlife Dispersal Area. Sinamatela is at the heart of the wildlife dispersal area linking Hwange (Zimbabwe) and Chobe National Park (Botswana) within the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) where Stakeholders are implementing cross border conservation programmes with four other countries, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Angola. There are serious implications that the proposed mining project will have, jeopardising agreements that were signed by the Government of Zimbabwe, particularly those involving significant support secured from non-governmental organizations.
- The animals are the stakeholders that have no voice and they will be decimated by mining activities within Hwange National Park, an impact not only on the short term but for subsequent generations. Of particular concern is the welfare of the African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*). This species has been exploited for far too long; the animals have been hunted for meat and ivory, and for centuries humans have encroached on wildlife areas and consequently confined these creatures to Nature Reserves and National Parks. Mining now threatens one of their last remaining sanctuaries.
- All wildlife is important, but elephants are of great significance as they are a “keystone species” and have a major impact on the environment largely for the benefit of other species. They have a developed brain, good memory, feel emotions (similar to humans) and thus deserve special consideration.
- Hwange National Park is home to a considerable number of animals all year round but of major importance are the populations of elephant and buffalo that congregate in the dry season (May-November). These animals thrive in this semi-arid environment and rely on water pumped from underground reservoirs. At the start of the rains (end November) most of these animals literally disappear overnight and head south (mainly to Botswana). This migratory pattern enables them to feed in one area, for approximately half the year, whilst the other area recovers. Preventing this annual migration would force the animals to remain in one area (mainly Botswana) all year



round with the resultant destruction of habitat and inevitable mass die off of many different species.

- We have evidence which shows that the highest concentration of elephants within Hwange National Park is present near the Special Mining Grant SG7263 concession.
- All creatures have an equal right to exist, roam on migratory routes if they choose, and live freely. Hwange National Park is home to 10% of the entire population of elephants on the African continent, the threat of mining activities in the Park will displace all of these elephants leaving them with nowhere to go.
- Vultures are critically endangered and as these birds cover vast areas reducing natural habitat would hasten their demise.
- With no game drives occurring within Hwange National Park due to the loss of tourism resulting from mining, there will be no eyes on the ground, safeguarding and protecting the wildlife. Zimbabwe's legacy of wildlife preservation will be replaced by hazardous and destructive degradation as a direct result of open cast mining of fossil fuels.
- Wildlife is our heritage, and no one should have the right to deny future generations the privilege of seeing and experiencing nature. Surely President Mnangagwa, you do not want to see wildlife and conservation in Hwange National park being destroyed.

### **Archeological sites with historic significance, history and culture**

- Mining within Hwange National Park will destroy and violate cultural sites and the ancestral shrines of the people from Hwange thereby also destroying the cultural heritage of residents in the Hwange region.
- The history of Hwange's people will vanish with the imposition of mining activities in Hwange National Park. Masuma Dam is the historic site for Masuma village, a cultural village where the ancestors of some Hwange residents were born.
- Mtoa, Bumbusi and Shangano are significant ancestral shrines of the Nambya and the Rozvi people and hold historic archeological significance. They will be impacted by coal mining activities in Hwange National Park.

### **Human health, community and socioeconomic impact**

- Tourism could potentially become a multi-billion-dollar industry for Zimbabwe, creating millions of jobs for Zimbabweans and providing significantly more value than the marginal gains to be produced through fossil fuel extraction or coal mining.
- In 2020, the displacement of wildlife due to increased mining activities in Hwange has already produced an increase in the number of deaths resulting from human wildlife conflicts when compared to previous years. Mining activities force wild animals to become stressed and dangerous as they are pushed out of their natural habitat and enter nearby communal areas in search of alternative spaces to live.
- The residents of Hwange have expressed concerns about the quality of water within the vicinity of mining areas. It is reported that already, water supply within the Hwange region may be contaminated due to mining activities. Mining within Hwange National Park will therefore similarly contaminate water sources for humans as well as for the flora and fauna.
- Mining activities in Hwange National Park will desecrate indigenous knowledge by destroying a fragile ecosystem and biodiversity within the Park.

- Polluted air can cause serious health conditions including respiratory problems such as silicosis and pneumoconiosis. The introduction of mining activities in Hwange National Park will increase the health risk and exposure to air pollution for the residents of Hwange.
- Many people in Hwange already live in abject poverty, and since Covid-19, the area is already economically vulnerable. Mining activities within Hwange National Park will result in more loss and due to the disruption of tourism.
- Renewable energy like such as solar power do not emit CO2 and is more sustainable than mining for fossil fuels such as coal which emit toxins and other hazards to humans and to the environment.
- Any jobs created through mining activities within Hwange National Park will be short lived when compared to the perpetual and less hazardous job outlook provided by the tourism sector.
- Air and water pollution caused by mining of fossil fuels within Hwange National Park will further contribute towards global warming emissions and climate change.
- In the long run for Hwange residents and Stakeholders, the future for our children will be in tourism and not in the short-term extractive mining of fossil fuels.
- The Residents of the Hwange community have indicated that they intend to organize follow up meetings to address their concerns about mining activities in Hwange National Park.

We can provide documentation in support of the predictions and implications listed in our statement and we ask you to review the video from our September 3rd Stakeholder Meeting.

We humbly request that you cancel all Special Grants that are within Hwange National Park and all of the National Parks of Zimbabwe. You have promised to be a listening President. As our President, save our tourism industry and preserve the livelihoods of millions of people within Zimbabwe and around the world. Hwange National Park, the wildlife and cultural shrines it contains is our heritage and a legacy to be left for our children and their children.

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