

CIVIL SOCIETY PRESS STATEMENT ON THE PETROLEUM BILLS MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT STAND FIRM FOR RIGHT NOT MIGHT

Good morning Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen

You are aware that parliament yesterday deliberated on the petroleum bill that is intended to govern the exploration, development and production of the oil resource in Uganda. The disagreement is specifically with clause 9 that gives the Minister excessive discretionary powers to negotiate, license, revoke licenses, open-up new exploration areas, approving data, development plans and management systems and any other functions incidental or consequential to his or her functions.

Ugandans should be aware that the contention under this clause is the putting of too much power in the hands of a single individual who is the Minister responsible for petroleum; failing to distribute responsibility among different key government Ministries, departments and agencies; and the lack of parliamentary oversight where decision making processes are concerned.

You aware that, a few weeks ago, Parliament had amended this clause 9 to capture the doctrine of separation of powers between the Minister and the Petroleum Authority and other relevant government MDAs, but later on some MPs including the current Minister of Energy and Mineral Development, changed their mind and moved that this clause be re-introduced into the bill in its original form.

Fellow Ugandans, you are also aware that the Speaker of Parliament on Thursday 22nd November 2012 adjourned the debate on the Petroleum, Exploration, Development and Production Bill to Tuesday 27th November (yesterday) after the House failed to raise quorum to vote on the issue of re-introducing of Clause 9 in its original form.

Yesterday, 27th November 2012, our members of parliament were given an opportunity to decide whether or not to recommit clause 9 in its original form, but the debate become so heated that it collapsed when parliament become uncontrollable for the Speaker who had to be whisked away.

We Civil Society Organizations, here represented have convened this Press Conference as a follow-up to our previous press statements on the on-going debate in Parliament on the Petroleum bills and to update Ugandan citizens of what is going on in parliament.

First of all, we would like to thank the Members of Parliament—across the political divide—for standing firm for what is right and not succumbing to might and refusing to legislate the resource-curse syndrome in the petroleum bill and demanding a thorough and informed debate regarding the powers given to the minister responsible for petroleum sector.

We would like to pledge our continued support to the MPs and commitment to keep up the pressure to ensure that the right legal and institutional framework is put in place.

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We maintain our earlier position that Uganda's petroleum resource is better overseen and managed by an independent institution (the Petroleum Authority) and not a political office. We also do not want to see our petroleum resource given to an individual Minister to manage.

We call upon all Ugandans to support this position and to keep their MPs under pressure as their representative to legislate in favour of an independent institution, (in this case, the Petroleum Authority), to govern the oil resource and balancing of power between the different arms of government- the Parliament, Executive and Judiciary.

We implore the Executive to desist from arm-twisting parliament and turning it into its voting machinery and respect the doctrine of separation of powers as enshrined in our Constitution.

For God and My Country

Signed:

Civil Society Coalition on Oil & Gas (CSCO)

Water Governance Institute (WGI)

National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)

Uganda National NGO Forum

Global Rights Alert (GRA)

International Alert

Action Aid Uganda

Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA)

Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE)

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)

Publish What You Pay- Uganda

Oil Watch Network- Uganda