



CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND REHABILITATION (CHRR)

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CHRR CONCERNS ON KAYELEKERA URANIUM MINING

The Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation take this opportunity to request the Ministry for Mines, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs to address the concerns Kayelekera uranium project with utmost caution. CHRR is responding following the Minister of Mines, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs comments regarding our concerns on the mine operations and Environmental impact assessment as appeared in the Nation of 1st November, 2005.

For the interest of the general public on the issue CHRR would like to highlight on the summary background which might encourage the honourable minister and his ministry to shed more light on the whole issue.

Background

Back in the 1980's Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) a UK company discovered the high grade Kayelekera sandstone uranium deposit. It is documented that CEGB spent US\$9 million working on the project for over 8 years culminating to a full feasibility study in 1991 by Wright Engineers Limited of Canada. However, the study indicated that the project was uneconomical due to the mining model that CEGB was to adopt and the uranium prices were low at the time. The project was abandoned in 1992, owing to the poor outlook for uranium as well as the privatization of CEGB according to the master minders. CHRR feels it would have been important for the then government of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) to actually enlighten the nation as to what happened.

However, in 1999 Paladin Resources Limited Inc an Australian company acquired 90% interest in the project through a joint venture from Balmain Resources Limited, who retained 10% of free carried interest until the completion of the Bankable Feasibility Study (BFS).

In 2000, the project was transferred to the Malawian registered company Paladin Africa Limited a wholly owned subsidiary of Paladin Resources Inc. Further, the company proceeded on with engineering and financial evaluation using new project development concepts which showed positive outcome for the economy. The CEGB 1989-92 pre-feasibility study was also updated and metallurgical and resource drilling commenced in 2004.

In May 2005 the BFS commenced to verify new mining/milling concepts that are to be adopted as well as validation (or modification if required) of all other environmental and mine model parameters used in 1991 final feasibility study.

With this kind of background/information exclusive of what Paladin Resources Inc has posted on their website and others concerning the Kayelekera project, it is regrettable for Mines, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, Minister to say he does not know what kind of report CHRR is looking for.

On 27th October 2005, CHRR together with Karonga Development Trust (KADET) members, on a fact finding mission visited the Kayelekera uranium site. We may not be experts but undeniably there are activities

taking place, whereas the ministry has not informed Malawians in general let alone the resident communities within the prospective operation area of this project.

In addition, the Mines, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Minister and his Lands counterpart have on miscellaneous occasions personally visited the Paladin mining camp in Kayelekera, without divulging information. As government officials why has there been no account in regard to these visits either to the National Assembly, the public or elsewhere but just little information in the print media? Then one would not help to question whose interests are being served.

CHRR wishes to emphatically observe that, the secretive approach which the government and Paladin Resources Inc have chosen to pursue leaves a lot to be desired. Besides, how is a Bankable Feasibility Study on and yet the Environmental Impact Assessment Study which is a standard requirement has not been carried out? Who comes first, is it Malawi or Paladin (Australia)? This is what CHRR together with all concerned Malawians would like to know.

We are also equally concerned and greatly dissatisfied with the whole procedure as it seems geared to sink, defeat and overwhelm the right to access to information to Malawians in particular the people Kayelekera area which is enshrined in Section 37 of our republican Constitution.

However, uranium mining being an area of significant interest in the world at present our purpose as CHRR is to marshal, inform and assist the resident communities (would victims of radiation) identify the key issues and rights associated with uranium mining. It is our aspiration that the **USES, BENEFITS** as well as **HAZARDS** of uranium shall be understood and the determination of the future arrived at soberly and appropriately.

All Malawians should know and understand that uranium mining has stimulated immense distress in respect to environmental and radiation aspects over the last three decades around the globe. Indeed, from the economic perspective CHRR understands that it is clear there might be an opportunity for our beloved country Malawi to profit from uranium mining. However, we would like to raise this supreme and most fundamental question **WHETHER OR NOT THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OUTWEIGH THE SOCIAL CONCERNS AND HAZARDS** considering that the Kayelekera mine life span will only be 10-12 years.

CHRR finally wishes to remind the government and the general public that:

1. Uranium mining carries the danger of airborne radioactive dust and the release of radioactive radon gas and its decay products which is hazardous to the general public and workers.
2. Uranium has radiological consequences for employees if not well protected risking development of lung cancer and other pulmonary diseases.
3. There will be contamination of water resource use with the toxic chemicals used in the separation of the uranium ore.
4. Mismanagement of uranium disposal waste from leaching ore can have long term health and environmental consequences.

CHRR, KADET and others concerned might not achieve every goal and may concede to lack of scientific and legal authority to realize the necessary goals immediately but, assistance and assurance from the relevant authorities, environmental organizations and well-wishers that fight to preserve and monitor the environment for posterity will certainly come so as to win respect as Malawians.

Lastly, CHRR refuses to accept the government's and Paladin Resources Inc assumption that Kayelekera is the sacrificial land. CHRR will continue to fight for human rights; environmental justice and most of all protect the Kayelekera land.

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