

Govt acts on Chinese mining

17 April 2013

Namibian

By: Willem Odendaal

THE Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) has appealed to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to stop a Chinese company from conducting mining activities in the Anabeb Conservancy.

Environmental Commissioner Theofilus Nghitila issued a three-year environmental clearance certificate on 8 March 2013 to Namibia Hauxin Resources Exploration and Development Limited.

The certificate was after an environmental contract was entered between the government and the company, which was made on the basis of the information provided in the questionnaire.

Nghitila said he was “satisfied” that the company had provided “sufficient commitments to limit unnecessary environmental impacts” for the duration of its exploration activities on the basis of the documents provided.

LAC’s land, environment and development researcher Willem Odendaal yesterday confirmed that they have launched an appeal with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism on the Chinese company’s mining activities and that they are happy with the Ministry’s involvement so far.

The Anabeb Conservancy Committee, represented by the LAC, has re-considered applying for an prohibiting act against the Chinese company that is accused of causing environmental damage and non-compliance with the regulations of the Environmental Management Act. The Namibian reported recently that the Chinese company is using old machinery, a 4x4 double-cab bakkie and a shovel that are un-equipped as earthmoving. The company is said to have caused destruction of the rare and protected plant *Welwitschia mirabilis* and to make matters worse the conservancy is in a sensitive desert area and eco tourism is badly disturbed.

“We give MET credit for showing interest in this matter and we are willing to work together with them on this case,” Odendaal said .

He claimed the Chinese company has drilled three boreholes in a very dry area for human consumption and that the traditional authority in the Anabeb Conservancy was not happy with the company’s activities.

However their main concern is that the community is terrified of poaching and does not want the movement of wildlife disturbed as trucks are moving in and out of the area. One rhino has reportedly already been poached since the mining activities started.

Environmentalist John Kasaona said MET has shown immediate commitment and willingness to seek a solution and concerned parties have been re-assured that they would work on this as a matter of urgency.

“I believe that we should support our communities in their wish that the Environmental Act and regulations pertaining to environmental impact assessments need to be followed to the letter. It is also our obligation as citizens to abide by the rule of law” said Kasaona.

Nghitila has informed the LAC that the ministry will conduct an investigation into the mining company’s exclusive prospecting licence (EPL).