

## **Coffee Morning with Stakeholders:**

### **“Update on Lake Natron Soda Ash Project”**

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

9.30 – 11 a.m.

#### **Draft Minutes**

##### **1. Participants:**

The meeting was well attended by representatives from government sectors/departments, NGOs, media and the investor, full list is attached as Annex 1.

##### **2. Opening:**

During his opening remarks, the World Bank Country Director - Mr. John Murray McIntire, who also chaired the meeting, briefed the participants on the general objective of the coffee morning meetings, which are frequently organized by the Bank to provide a platform for information sharing and discussions on any subject of interest to the public. The chairman also informed the participants that, despite the interest and responsibility on global public good, the Bank is not involved in the financing of the proposed Soda Ash project at Lake Natron.

##### **3. Presentations:**

Two presentations were made: (i) Lake Natron’s Flamingo – A Tanzanian Treasure: The importance of Lake Natron to the Economics of Tanzania and Beyond, Especially to Local Communities, by Mr. Lota Melamari, CEO/Coordinator of Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST); and (ii) Lake Natron Soda Ash Project (Update Status), by Mr. Rahul Singh, Project Manager, Lake Natron Resources Limited. The two presentations are attached as Annex 2 and 3 respectively.

##### **4. Highlights from the Presentations:**

*A Tanzanian Treasure: The importance of Lake Natron to the Economics of Tanzania and Beyond, Especially to Local Communities – WCST:*

- **Preamble:** Since there is no official announcement from the Government so far, it is assumed that the government is yet to make a decision; the campaign is therefore, still live and it is attracting more attention all over the world. WCST and its partners see it their duty to raise public awareness on the impacts that the proposed development of soda ash extraction will have on Lake Natron. It is proposed to use this year’s World Environment Day in June to feature Lake

Natron; WCST is calling for partners to join in the process by supporting the advocacy materially.

- Lake Natron ecosystem is the world's most important breeding site for Lesser Flamingo, and the only regular and successful breeding site in Eastern Africa, accounting for 75% of breeding success of the global population
- Lake Natron is a Ramsar site – a wetland of international importance; an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a cross-border ecosystem
- Lesser Flamingo, which is listed as *near-threatened species*, makes an important contribution to tourism in East Africa and to livelihoods.
- The Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) is inadequate in many aspects thereby lacking adequate mitigation measures to huge threats posed by the proposed development as currently known.

*Lake Natron Soda Ash Project (Update Status) - Lake Natron Resources Limited:*

- Have decided not to locate the plant at lake-side and that therefore none of the 3 sites originally studied in ESIA are relevant.
- 3 alternate sites have been identified of which the site located (~32 km from the lake) appears to be suitable
- Intend to carry out a fresh ESIA for this site and ensure that other facilities such as power and ground water are available or can be made available at that site
- A request has been submitted to NEMC to “Suspend present ESIA Report” till submission of new ESIA for the new site outside the RAMSAR boundary, Government decision is awaited
- Prior to commissioning of the new ESIA study, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism will be requested to come out with an approved Integrated Ramsar Management Plan for Lake Natron. The proposal is to work within the framework and guidelines of this plan and to abide by it.
- After getting positive response to our request to NEMC and receiving the approved Ramsar Management Plan for Lake Natron, the following studies will be carried out: (i) New ESIA for alternative site(s) which will be outside Ramsar boundary, brine pipe line and road; (ii) 2nd Phase of hydrology study to ensure that there is no change in the chemical composition of the lake going forward and that the micro algae will be unaffected by this development; (iii) Identification of fresh water sources; and (iv) Revalidation of Plant Engineering taking into consideration the new plant site, water availability and outcome of 2nd phase of hydrology study.

**5. Discussion:** Issues raised during the discussion included:

- Uncertainty on the source of fresh water to suffice the requirement of the plant as well as the ecosystem including communities around Lake Natron,

- Unforeseen impact from increased population and related human activities on the Lake ecosystem
- Inadequate consultation with local communities neighbouring the Lake (Longido, Ngorongoro and Kajiado districts)
- The need to consult neighbouring countries in the whole process
- Which type of algae do Lesser Flamingo feed on?
- Changes in hydrology and water chemistry have not been adequately explained
- Levels of disturbance to Lesser Flamingo is of great concern
- Changes in land use may adversely impact the social set up of pastoralist communities
- Poaching pressure on a number of wildlife species will increase
- Wilderness quality for tourists will be reduced

## **6. Closing and way forward**

Based on the discussion that was generated by the two presentations, there was a unanimous agreement from the participants for a way forward. Proposed ideas included:

- ESIA to be repeated based on the new identified site, 30 km away from the originally identified site;
- Ramsar Site Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for Lake Natron need to be urgently prepared;
- Since EMA (2004) requires Integrated Management Plans, that consider all resources, the Wildlife Division should coordinate the process for the production of the Lake Natron Ramsar Site Management Plan and come up with an immediate plan by July, 2008;
- Propose to establish a Task Force that will mobilize districts and other stakeholders in the process
- Based on the cross border externalities of Lake Natron ecosystem / Lesser Flamingo covering multiple groups of countries and populations, the scope of the consultation process needs to be wider. This implies that a regional plan is required
- Current /identified information gaps calls for support for more studies

## Attendees

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