

Crull

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT URGING GOVERNMENT TO ELIMINATE THE USE OF MERCURY IN ARTISANAL SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING

(Moved under rule 55 and 56 of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament)

WHEREAS Article 39 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda recognizes the right of every Ugandan to a clean and healthy environment;

AND WHEREAS Uganda on 1st March 2019 ratified the Minamata Convention on mercury which imposes an obligation on Government to protect the human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds;

AWARE THAT small-scale gold miners in Uganda are in contact with mercury at different stages of the mining process especially at the stages of amalgamation and purification whereby mercury causes irreparable and irreversible damage to their health once inhaled or in direct contact;

CONCERNED THAT the concentration of mercury in the environment is risky to human health whereby mere exposure and absorption of mercury vapor can lead to lung cancer, tremors, skin rashes and eye irritation, this danger is also escalated by the fact that artisanal gold miners store mercury in closed containers which they either keep at home or at the site contrary to the requirements of the United Nations industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) that prohibit storage of mercury in a domestic residence or making it accessible to children and pregnant women;

CONCERNED FURTHER THAT during a study conducted by the Action Coalition on Climate Change (ACCC) in 2018, it was observed that lack of awareness and skills about the use of other methods other than mercury is the leading reason for the use of mercury by miners in the sampled mining sites of Busia and Mubende followed by the availability and affordability of mercury, high costs of other alternatives and lack of national laws to regulate mercury use;

NOTING THAT the ACCC (2018) study also indicated that the international best practices for handling mercury waste which require that contaminated mercury waste should be sealed in plastic bags inside a second plastic bag sealed with duct tape and a label reading “mercury-hazardous waste” affixed or as directed by local authorities and labeled “Do not Open” have not been complied with which can be attributed to lack of knowledge about better waste management practices;

FURTHER NOTING THAT a review of the existing national laws, policies and environmental legislation indicates that although the effects of mercury on the environment and human health are dire and widely documented, there have

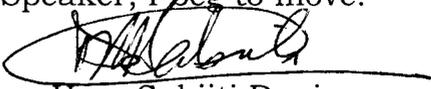
not been attempts to regulate its use in Uganda's artisanal small scale gold miners (ASGM) sub-sector;

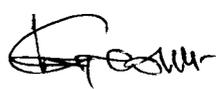
CONVINCED THAT there is urgent need to control the use, storage and waste disposal of mercury in Uganda's artisanal and small-scale gold mining sites as a means of ensuring that all Ugandans enjoy a clean and healthy environment;

NOW WHEREFORE be it resolved by Parliament that Government;

1. Domesticates and operationalizes the enforcement of the Minamata Convention that prohibits the use of mercury in gold mining.
2. Creates awareness about the dangers of the use of mercury in gold mining and promotes alternative methods to its use such as use of gravity methods, panning and direct smelting among other methods in extraction of gold.
3. Examines the levels of concentration of mercury through laboratory tests of samples of:-
 - (i) blood of miners and adjacent communities
 - (ii) water, and
 - (iii) agricultural soils in all artisanal gold mining sites in Uganda, where mercury is rampantly used so as to come up with proper and lasting solutions in pursuit of public health and ensuring a clean and healthy environment.
4. Fast tracks the formulation of a new mining policy and a new mining bill for proper regulation of the activities of the miners and adjacent communities in order to minimize risks involved in artisanal small scale mining.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, I beg to move.


Mover: Hon. Sabiiti Denis
RUBANDA COUNTY WEST


Second: Hon. Macho Geoffrey
BUSIA MUNICIPALITY


Second: Hon. Mbwatekamwa Gaffa
KASAMBYA COUNTY