

March 19, 2008

Mr. Gerald Doucet  
Secretary General  
World Energy Council  
Regency House 1-4 Warwick Street  
London W1B 5LT United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Doucet,

RE: Civil society participation in the Grand Inga Financing Workshop to be held in April 2008

On April 21-22, 2008, the World Energy Council will facilitate its second, high-level financing workshop to move forward development of the Grand Inga hydropower project in Democratic Republic of Congo. Grand Inga represents the single, largest energy infrastructure investment in sub-Saharan Africa, a region where the majority of the population continues to lack access to modern energy services. Project planning is drawing interest and involvement from governments, industries and financiers from Africa and beyond. Civil society participation is vital to the legitimacy of this project and we would very much like to participate in this process.

We are part of communities and organizations which represent social and economic interests which are already at risk in this project and we seek to participate in the decision-making process. Many of us are also part of the African Rivers Network, the key civil society network that is operating across Africa around the issue of large dams and alternatives. We lack the resources to ensure our continued participation in such high-level meetings where participation can influence project decisions. We are disappointed that, since mid-February, the World Energy Council has declined our requests to facilitate financial support for members of affected communities and African civil society groups to participate in the upcoming workshop.

The World Energy Council has also suggested that any representatives of African civil society which are involved in such meetings should be chosen by governments and other institutions already involved in project promotion. Limiting civil society participation to individuals chosen by project promoters or by limiting the scope of civil society involvement to participation in environmental and social assessments does not change the dynamics of power in the development decisions which will affect local communities and other civil society. We believe that the African Rivers Network would serve as the appropriate entity to nominate to the project planning process those ARN members who are relevant to the Grand Inga discussions.

We again request that the World Energy Council facilitate financial support for reasonable travel expenses to the April financing workshop in London as a step toward ensuring the adequate participation of affected communities and civil society groups in the project planning process. At this time, there are six interested parties:

- Mr. Mpila Vangu, a traditional chief of the Inga area and representative of the affected communities
- Pasteur Jacques Bakulu of CEPECO, an NGO based in Bas-Congo Province, DRC

- Mr. Augustin Mpoyi of the Congolese NGO network, REPEC based in Kinshasa, DRC
- A representative of Avocats Vert, an NGO based in Kinshasa, DRC
- Mr. Bryan Ashe of Earthlife eThekweni, an NGO based in Durban, South Africa
- Mr. Baruti Amisi, an academic researcher based at the Centre for Civil Society at the University of Kwazulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa

In March 2007, the World Energy Council organized a similar high-level workshop in Gaborone, Botswana. We appreciated that the meeting was opened to civil society, but were frustrated by the lack of support for civil society participation; we met our participation costs independently. During this workshop, we were given several verbal assurances by organizers and government participants that civil society would be meaningfully included in project planning, and resources would be provided to ensure that this happens. However, we believe that the World Energy Council and other project promoters are ignoring the promises they made during that workshop.

Financial support for civil society participation has happened in a number of high-level meetings related to dams in Africa. In March 2006, organizers of the *African Ministerial Conference on Hydropower and Sustainable Development* used funding from GTZ, the Norwegian Government and the World Bank to cover the participation costs of 23 members of ARN. In July 2007, about 10 members of ARN from Southern and East African countries were sponsored to attend the *Southern and East Africa Seminar on Mega Water Infrastructure Development*.

Between 2001 and 2004, a multi-stakeholder initiative took place in South Africa to incorporate the World Commission on Dams' recommendations into the national context. State-owned Eskom, a key figure in Westcor and regional energy development, was party to this process. The final report noted repeatedly that civil society participation should take place at the earliest levels of planning and that resources need to be available to capacitate and empower both affected communities and the general public to understand the issues associated with dams and sustainability. The South African government has also increasingly included civil society groups in its delegations to major international events such as the annual UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the tri-annual World Water Forum.

A 2003 report entitled *Key Dam Issues in the SADC Region* by GTZ cited that two fundamental issues in planning and decision-making of new dam projects will be to:

- Facilitate decision-making with the involvement of all stakeholders
- Ensure early involvement of stakeholders at all levels of the community, up to international level where appropriate, with proper facilitation and empowerment of vulnerable groups, to gain full participatory and meaningful decision-making.

The following are two relevant quotes from the World Commission on Dams' 2000 report, *Dams and Development*:

“Large dams have increasingly been characterized by bitter conflict and deep feelings of resentment and injustice. Beginning to correct this situation will require not only new processes for taking decisions, but building confidence in these processes and

their ability to deliver genuinely better outcomes for water and energy resource development. In seeking to build this confidence we do not, in many cases, begin with a clean slate, but with a difficult legacy that needs to be recognised. This legacy can only be overcome if there is a rapid investment of confidence in the legitimacy of the processes that are put in place.”

“To be socially legitimate and produce positive and lasting outcomes, development projects should provide for greater involvement of all interested parties. A fair, informed and transparent decision-making process, based on the acknowledgement and protection of existing rights and entitlements, will give all stakeholders the opportunity to fully and actively participate in the decision-making process. Instead of exacerbating existing inequalities, water and energy resources development should be opportunities for achieving a high level of equity. The planning process should be sensitive to, and take account of, social and economic disparities, and devise and implement mechanisms for addressing them.”

We look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

Mr. Augustin Mpoyi, REPEC

Pasteur Jacques Bakulu, CEPECO

Mr. Bryan Ashe, Earthlife eThekweni

Mr. Baruti Amisi, Centre for Civil Society

Mr. Robert Kugonza, African Rivers Network

Ms. Terri Hathaway, International Rivers