Statement from Ugandan and Tanzanian Civil Society Organisations Regarding China's Reported Support for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)

We, a collection of Ugandan and Tanzanian CSOs working with communities directly impacted by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and related Tilenga and Kingfisher oil field projects (the EACOP projects), are writing to the Chinese President to express our grave concerns regarding recent reports about President Xi Jinping's endorsement of this project.

In November 2023, we supported and joined in making the calls to the Chinese embassies in Uganda, Tanzania and the DRC to express our strong concerns and share analyses of the environmental and socio-economic risks of the projects as well as our assessment of the incredible harm already caused primarily through extreme disruptions to livelihood and the displacement of thousands of families along the EACOP route. This intervention was necessitated by the news reports that the China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinosure), the Export-Import Bank of China (China Eximbank) and several other Chinese banks were considering providing finance to the EACOP project.

The construction of the EACOP projects threatens the safety and livelihoods of millions and, through its inevitable exacerbation of the climate crisis, poses a major risk to the security and stability of the entire region and the world. Many of the communities we work in have been forcibly displaced from their ancestral lands, receiving unfair compensation that fails to reflect the actual value of what they have lost. In turn, communities have suffered greater levels of food insecurity and have been unable to access basic services like education and healthcare. Alongside the communities we work in, we fear for our environment, with the potential for oil spills and lasting environmental damage, including important and life-giving water sources and wetlands. We also express grave concern about the deepening socio-economic crisis in many impacted communities brought about by the disruptions to livelihood and important cultural institutions. The very social fabric of affected communities has been unravelled as families have been relocated in culturally inappropriate ways, and many have even had important cultural sites desecrated, as evidenced by the disturbance to sacred burial sites.

Our concerns extend to recent developments surrounding the Kingfisher Oil Drilling site on the shores of Lake Albert, which is operated and partly owned by the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC). Here, impacted communities have shared stories of extreme violence and repression that they have been subjected to by members of the UPDF who have been deployed to defend the Kingfisher project. These injustices include the confiscation and burning of boats and equipment belonging to local fishermen, which essentially amounts to a deliberate and direct attack on their livelihoods and well-being. Likewise, communities have reported that UPDF soldiers have effectively occupied their villages, which has sparked a remarkable increase in gender-based violence and instances of sexual violence, including rape and other severe forms of sexual assault.

These stories and others like them are emerging across the length of the EACOP pipeline route and throughout the many communities impacted by its related projects. Numerous families in Uganda have documented these struggles with the help of local and international human and

environmental rights organisations. Their stories and experiences have been collated and presented to the authorities and project officials. Yet, none have engaged meaningfully with us or with the communities directly impacted by the pipeline and related projects, nor have they taken any steps to mend the damage that has been done.

A damning report by AFIEGO exposes how the EACOP project is harming Ugandan communities. Displaced families lack proper compensation and face financial hardship, confirming concerns raised by citizens in Uganda and Tanzania. Separately, faith leaders documented over 2,000 graves destroyed along the pipeline route.

Raising further alarms, Global Witness revealed that project proponents failed to adequately assess the human rights risks of partnering with authoritarian regimes on this project. Their dismissal of civic space attacks contradicts their responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. China's involvement also risks enabling abuses.

Despite mounting evidence of human rights violations, environmental destruction, and lack of due diligence, project proponents appear focused on profits at all costs. This disregard for impacted communities and international standards is unacceptable.

Similar situations unfold in Tanzania, where communities along the EACOP route are already reeling from the impacts of land dispossession and have been unable to make ends meet. As in Uganda, those who seek to ensure that the authorities and officials understand their plight have been intimidated, interrogated and monitored. We urge you to take note of these experiences.

Civil Society Organisations in Tanzania have recently brought forward their concerns surrounding the ongoing intimidation, interrogation and harassment of project-affected persons who have been travelling over 120 km from their village to the nearest police station to respond to summons since March. None of the nine PAPs have been charged but they have faced interrogation and been asked to report every two weeks. The CSOs issued a statement condemning these intimidation tactics and called on Total and CNOOC to uphold their commitment to respecting communities and denounce these actions.

Several legal cases concerning human rights violations and unfair compensation related to EACOP are ongoing in Ugandan courts, the East African Court of Justice, and France. Bypassing these legal processes disrespects the Ugandan judiciary and undermines the rule of law.

China's potential support for the EACOP projects raises serious questions about President Xi's commitments to cooperate with African countries to build an open and inclusive economy through paths chosen by the people. In contrast, the Export Credit Agencies of France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany, as well as 29 insurance and reinsurance companies, 27 commercial banks, and the African Development Bank, have publicly ruled out support for EACOP. Several have explicitly attributed their decision to concerns over EACOP's ongoing and anticipated environmental and social impacts.

True partnership is built on respect for human rights, fair compensation for affected communities, a commitment to environmental sustainability and a genuine interest in developmental projects that would benefit ordinary people. We urge China to prioritise supporting long-term development

in Africa, not short-term resource extraction that leaves communities impoverished and enables the ongoing neocolonial extraction and exploitation of Western multinational corporations like TotalEnergies.

We call upon the Chinese government to:

- Withhold support for the EACOP project and its associated oil drilling projects.
- Ensure that all outstanding human rights violations, compensation issues, and environmental harms are addressed and that recourse is offered, according to international standards and best practices.
- Ensure that Chinese stakeholders involved in the project observe the ongoing legal cases and urge Ugandan counterparts to ensure these cases proceed fairly and transparently.
- Engage with Ugandan communities to understand the true impact of the EACOP projects and pursue developmental partnerships that align with their aspirations for renewable energy and sustainable local economies.

China can build a strong partnership with Uganda and Tanzania that is focused on sustainable development that benefits everyone by working together. However, this can only be achieved through a commitment to transparency, respect for human rights, and environmental responsibility. We urge the Chinese government to stand with the Ugandan and Tanzanian communities suffering from the EACOP project.

We respectfully ask President Xi to reconsider support for the project and respond to our letter by **10th June 2024**. We would be happy to discuss our concerns and thoughts further on how China can invest in sustainable development and a green energy future in Uganda. Please contact us at eacopdayofaction@gmail.com.

Signatories and endorsements:

1. Youth for Green Communities, Uganda
2. Environment Governance Institute, Uganda
3. Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management, Uganda
4. East African Crude Oil Pipeline Host Communities, Uganda
5. Strategic Response on Environmental Conservation, Uganda
6. Oil Refinery Residents Association, Uganda
7. African Initiative on Food Security & Environment, Uganda
8. Centre for Environmental Research & Agriculture Innovations, Uganda
9. Fridays for Future, Uganda
10. Community Transformation Foundation Network, Uganda
11. Youth for Environmental Justice & Climate Action, Uganda
12. Nature Talk Africa, Uganda
13. Kibengo Youth Care Activists, Uganda

14. Africa Institute for Energy Governance, Uganda
15. Solidarity, Uganda
16. GreenFaith, Uganda
17. GreenFaith, Tanzania
18. Green Conservers, Tanzania
19. Organization for Community Engagement, Tanzania
20. Population & Development Initiative, Tanzania