

LETTERS OF THE DAY

Lake Albert is at risk of pollution

EDITOR: With an estimated width of 160 and 30km Lake Albert has a maximum depth of 51 meters.

It is the seventh largest lake in Africa and, therefore, it is among Africa's great lakes. The lake is found in the Albertine rift, western branch of the East African rift and its trans boundary between Uganda and DR Congo.

According to the meeting with oil companies and civil society organisations that took place at Protea Hotel this month, an estimated 450,000 cubic meters of water will be needed daily to run the oil and gas production.

And it's also estimated that 165,000 cubic meters will be need for domestic use and 200,000 cubic meters for irrigation for food production.

The rate will increase as production

starts. One cubic meter contains 1,000 litres of water.

This has caused fear among local communities, considering that most depend on Lake Albert for fishing, farming and domestic use.

Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs) are usually carried out on projects such as the envisaged Lake Albert oil exploitation, but by their nature they offer no guarantee of safety.

They are essentially a way to reduce dangers and ensure that adequate procedures are in place to mitigate damage, but they are only governed by the regulations of the particular country where the work is to be carried out.

The criteria of an EIA done in Uganda may not be acceptable in DR Congo. In case of any disagreement between the

two Countries, L. Albert will be at risk.

Recycled water, no matter how well-maintained and treated, brings the risk of an oil spillage. Richer countries, America or China, still have effects of oil spills and what will happen to a developing country like Uganda?

Water extraction would be chosen to minimize any possible environmental damage. This is not a noticeable factor in Uganda where the new environmental legal regime including the National Environment Bill, revised EIA regulations and new Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulations are yet to be put in place yet oil activities that can damage the environment are ongoing.

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PICTURE BY RONNIE KIJJAMBU

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