

# Government moves to review mining policy

By Moses Mulondo and Moses Walubiri

The Government has embarked on amending the Mining Policy and Mining Act to empower local artisan miners to participate in mining activities.

This was revealed yesterday by the Minister of Energy and Mineral Development, Irene Muloni, while responding to the petition moved by Mubende MPs over the recent eviction of local gold artisan miners in Mubende.

The decision followed a meeting President Yoweri Museveni had with the MPs, ministers and local leaders from Mubende on Sunday to resolve the impasse arising from the Government decision that left over 70,000 people evicted out of the gold mines in Mubende.

The MPs led by Bukuya County MP Dr Michael Bukenya had threatened to quit NRM if government refused to allow the residents back into the gold mines.

Muloni assured the House yesterday that within just one month a draft amended mining policy would be ready for presenting to Cabinet.

Muloni also assured the legislators that before this year ends, her ministry would have completed drafting a Bill for amending the Mining Act to put into it the necessary provisions for ensuring the local artisan groups are empowered with the necessary support to meaningfully participate in the lucrative business of mining so that it is not left as an exclusive business for foreign investors.

Muloni also revealed that in the meeting with the President, they had also resolved to give five square kilometres of the land with gold back to the local artisan miners.

"All this is being done to ensure there is harmony between the small-scale miners and the large scale miners. The Government is committed to empowering our people to legally participate in the mining activities," Muloni argued.

The minister promised that government would initiate



Energy minister Irene Muloni (right) and MP Mawokota South John Bosco Lubyayi Seguya chat after plenary yesterday. Photo by Maria Wamala

*"All this is being done to ensure there is harmony between the small-scale miners and the large scale miners."* Irene Muloni

various undertakings to organise, empower, and regulate the artisan miners.

Reacting to Muloni's presentation, Dr Bukenya confirmed that they had met the President and agreed on many things including, a plan to compensate those who were evicted for their properties which they lost.

Bukenya also revealed that the President had promised to visit Mubende on October 21 to listen to their concerns.

The President also promised to meet the MPs, ministers, and Mubende local leaders on September 26 to finalise the discussions they had on September 10, 2017.

"We have been able to reach here because of the overwhelming support Parliament accorded the petition we brought. We ask Parliament to delay the disposing of our a petition until we have seen serious commitment from the Executive to address the concerns of the people of Mubende," Bukenya requested.

Speaking on behalf of the Leader of Opposition, the deputy Opposition chief whip Roland Kaginda tasked the minister with explaining why only artisan gold miners of Mubende were evicted and those who operate in other parts of the country such as

Busia, Buhweju, Namutumba and Karamoja were not.

In her response, Muloni said: "We started with Mubende, but we shall be going to those other areas with illegal gold mining to regulate small-scale miners."

In his ruling on the matter, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Jacob Oulanyah, asked the Executive to address issues of concern for Mubende residents which require urgent interventions as the natural resources committee of Parliament scrutinises the petition to advise Parliament on what needs to be done in area of policies and laws.

On August 4, the army invaded Bukuya sub-county in Mubende and evicted over 70,000 people from the areas with gold reserves after giving them a notice of only two hours.

The area with gold deposits is over 208 square kilometres in size and the Government has given it to State House head of land division Gertrude Njuba who is partnering with investors from the UK.

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