

# No soda ash mining at Lake Natron without addressing environmental concerns, affirms Tanzania's Director of Environment

Title In an emphatic declaration of Tanzania's keen interest to ensure that development takes environmental issues into consideration, the Vice President's Office has affirmed that it will not compromise its position on environmentally damaging projects. Tanzania's Director of Environment in the Vice President's Office, Dr Julius Ningu, told *The Guardian on Sunday* and the Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) in an interview that "the government position for this particular site [Lake Natron] is to maintain [the] ecological system so that flamingos continue to breed ... When we talk of sustainable use of natural resources, we mean for the benefit of current and future generations, now extraction of soda ash for sure can't be beneficial to the future generations." See full story at

<http://www.ippmedia.com/frontend/index.php?l=34206> "This is very good news and in my opinion, Dr. Julius Ningu has stated the government position that no approval will be given for the mining of soda ash until the issues raised in the review of the first EIA are counteracted." says Mr Lota Melamari, avid campaigner for the conservation on Lake Natron and former Chief Executive of the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST, BirdLife in Tanzania) while commenting on the article. "This has shifted the burden of clarification to NDC who must prove beyond reasonable doubt that any planned exploration of Lake Natron's soda ash will not impact the breeding of Lesser Flamingo". BirdLife welcomes the progressive views expressed recently by the Government of Tanzania in the management of natural resources, both in safeguarding the world-famous Serengeti National Park, and now the Lake Natron Ramsar site. In 2006, the Tanzanian Government and the Indian company Tata Chemicals put forward proposals to build a large-scale industrial plant, supported by an extensive road and rail infrastructure, to extract soda ash from Lake Natron's water. Following a global campaign orchestrated by the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST, BirdLife in Tanzania), Tata withdrew from the project in 2008. But the National Development Corporation (NDC), a government agency, is leading a renewed push to reinstate the project.