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August 21, 2023

Xu JianLiang
China Africa Tannery
zhongfeiyang@163.com

Dear Xu,

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is disturbed by a continued discharge of toxic waste to rivers of Oromia, in Ethiopia. We write to open a dialogue with your company to stop the discharge of toxic waste from your tannery and provide compensation for victims.

OSA is a non-profit, multi-disciplinary international organization established to promote and foster scholarly studies in all fields pertaining to the Oromo people. OSA guides and promotes the health and wellbeing of the Oromo people, hence our decision to take up on this serious matter.

In 2009, appalled by alarming reports of the destruction of Lake Koka near Finfinne (Addis Ababa), Ethiopia, and the death of thousands of Oromo farmers by toxic waste discharged into the lake by The Ethiopia Tannery, the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) wrote a letter demanding that the tannery install wastewater treatment processes to at least conform to ISO (International Organization for Standardization) limits. We were somewhat satisfied by the responses of Ethiopia Tannery at the time. Unfortunately, the process of manufacturing leather from raw skins and hides at most of the more than 30 tanneries in Ethiopia still uses chemical-intensive chromium-based tanning.

Sadly, the situation in Ethiopia has become worse since. Numerous research and data collected recently, some listed as a footnote below, show that the comprehensive water pollution index at, for example, Little Akaki River varied from 0.84–13.32 milligrams per liter, indicating that the river water was heavily polluted. Reports confirm our fear that Little Akaki river, one of the country's most contaminated rivers, failed all major water quality tests. The river is the major source of drinking water for the downstream population.

OSA members are appalled by the continued discharge of toxic tannery wastewater into the rivers of Oromia. OSA has reviewed reports that heavy metals such as chromium, cadmium, lead, zinc, copper, iron, and nickel are likely released from your tanning plant into the Modjo (Mojo) River. Some non-metals including NO_3^- and PO_4^{3-} are also dumped into the river stream at levels that exceed international regulatory levels.

Downstream from your tannery, the Modjo River serves as a lifeline for millions of people, livestock, and vegetation, used for drinking and agriculture. As a tributary, it becomes one of the most toxic rivers polluting the Awash River - thereby putting the lives of tens of millions of people, animals, and aquatic life at great danger. UN-cited studies have established that heavy metal toxicity enters the bloodstream and damages the functioning of the brain, lungs, kidney, liver, and other vital organs. Over-exposure of both mother and fetus to heavy metals during pregnancy has been associated with preterm birth, reduced birth size and disability.

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Immensely concerned about consequences of industrial waste that your plant is likely discharging into rivers; we propose three steps to stop the discharge of pollutants into the Modjo River:

1. During the inquiry stage, we seek information about your plant. Our concern is grounded in establishing the well-being of the downstream population. Has your company monitored the above-mentioned pollutants or cooperated in a study of the discharge chemicals? If so, please provide us with the results of these studies. Have you obtained environmental certification such as ISO 14001, ISO 9001, ISO 13.020.40, etc.? We request that you share the studies and certifications with us by the end of next month September 30, 2023. With your permission, we will be happy to showcase your plant as an example of exemplary environmental stewardship.
2. As a follow-up step, we will discuss measures you could take to stop the discharge of pollutants into the river. We will provide you with the recommendations of our scientists in early 2024.
3. It is our hope that you will start making a voluntary assessment of the damage that your factory has so far caused to the health and livelihood of the downstream population and livestock.

Our goal is to help the impacted Oromo and other people in Ethiopia to secure access to clean drinking water by assisting to eliminate toxic release into the Modjo River or limit its discharge to internationally accepted levels. Lessons learned in cleaning up the Modjo River will be relevant to rivers throughout the region.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to our queries above.

Respectfully,
Oromo Studies Association

Cosignatory:

Oromo Scholars and Professionals group

CC

- Zainab Hawa Bangura, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, unep-africa@un.org
- Getahun Garedew, General Director, [FDRE Environment Protection Authority](#), efcccethiopia@gmail.com
- Mr. Dawud Ibsa, Oromo Liberation Front, Chair
- Prof. Marara Gudina, Oromo Federalist Congress, Chair

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- Hon. Meseret Assefa, Mayor of Modjo town
- Hon. Adanech Abebe, Mayor of Finfinne (Addis Ababa)
- Dr Trevor Trueman, Oromia Support Group, Chair
- Various medias: VOA, Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle, OMN, Kello