

Statement by the Mubende community representatives upon signing the Final Agreement with the New Forests Company (NFC)

July 8, 2013 in Kampala, Uganda

It is hard to imagine how far we have come, this agreement we have signed with the New Forests Company is an achievement although we still have a long way to go to improve our lives as a community. As representatives of the Mubende community affected by the land evictions, we would like to express utmost appreciation to God and everyone, especially Oxfam, who have been by our side throughout the process. It was not easy but with support we have come so far.

It was through Oxfam's support that our story made it to the CAO's desk. We are grateful that NFC decided to enter a mediation process and we thank them for their contribution to our new cooperative and look forward to being good neighbours with them.

Now, we have hope for the future. We know life cannot be as it was before but we are determined to rebuild our community. We have formed a cooperative, through which the company will give us assistance. We are all looking forward to the future.

As one of our community members has said about the hopes we have for our new start in life: "I have hope that the cooperative will prosper and that we will benefit a lot from it. As women we had jobs we used to do to bring in money for our families. We were farmers and with our husbands we ran a farm. As women we had different jobs we used to do. And we are happy to get the opportunity to do things again such as bee-keeping, knitting sweaters, making baskets, tablecloths and we even made soap! We are happy and hopeful we get land." (Jane Bazirete)

Starting afresh will not be easy but we have plans, we are determined and we believe that with continued support from different organisations, we shall rebuild our lives.

We have come this far because as a community we stayed united and looked out for each other. We respect the company's cooperation and the assistance agreed in our mediation settlement.

Our friends at Oxfam and counsel Onyango have advised us in the mediation, and gave us the independence to consult with our community and make our own decisions. We wish to remember our brothers and sisters in the Kiboga community and we pray that they will also reach an agreement with the New Forests Company. If we work together, we can achieve a lot.

Thank you.

On behalf of the Mubende Affected Community – William Bakeshisha, Loidah Nakacwa, Charles Ntwire, Stephen Ndyayebwanta, Jane Bazirete, Emmanuel Bagibariho, Olivia Mukaperedzida, Agnes Nyensi.