

# Ugandan faith leaders urge transparency after oil discovery

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(ENInews)--In Uganda, faith leaders are joining citizens in demanding openness in the handling of recently-discovered crude oil, which is inspiring hope for a better future for the East African country.

The faith leaders, who are uniting under the Inter-religious Council of Uganda, are warning that the laws governing the sector are too weak to guarantee transparency and accountability.

With the government announcing that the oil is potentially worth US\$13 billion, the council's chair, Roman Catholic Archbishop John Baptist Odama, said the group wanted a quick review of the laws governing the sector, in order to reflect the interest of citizens.

The country is currently reviewing the sector's main law -- the Petroleum Exploration Development and Production Bill 2012. But the leaders are warning the flaws of the first one were carried over into the proposed new one -- the Petroleum Refining, Gas Processing and Conversion, Transport and Storage Bill 2012.

On May 9, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, the Adventist Uganda Union and the Uganda Muslim Supreme groups presented a memorandum detailing their concerns to legislators in Parliament.

During the meeting, Odama urged a range of measures to assure the citizens of openness including regular updates. He also called for clear guidelines for adequate compensation for those displaced during exploration and extraction of the oil. Companies exploring for the oil must also implement appropriate remedies environmental pollution, according to Odama.

The group also wants protection and adequate remuneration for workers employed in the sector, when the country starts commercial extraction in 2017.

The oil was discovered in the Albertine basin along the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006. Two ministers are facing investigations for allegedly receiving bribes to fix licensing deals.