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## Assessment abuse in African protected areas

Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (1) promotes the establishment and management of protected areas. Article 14 of the CBD (1) requires the use of environmental assessments (2) to ensure that development within protected areas is sustainable. However, in southern Africa, governments have used the environmental assessment process to legitimize unsustainable development within protected areas. Article 14 of the CBD should be amended to ensure that these assessments act as intended to protect biodiversity.

Mining projects, which are fundamentally unsustainable, have been approved within the boundaries of protected areas across southern Africa (3). Copper mining was approved before being cancelled in the Lower Zambezi National Park in Zambia (4). Coal mining was approved in the Mabola protected environment in South Africa (5). Uranium mining is taking place in Namib-Naukluft National Park in Namibia (6, 7). The boundaries of the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania were adjusted to accommodate uranium mining (8). These mining projects have all been subject to environmental impact assessment processes (4–7, 9).

In southern Africa, political decision-makers have shown that they value the socioeconomic benefits of mining more

than the protection of biodiversity.

Environmental assessments focus both on the financial and social benefits and on the environmental risks of potential projects (2). However, providing information on both benefits and risks allows political decision-makers to legitimize biodiversity loss as an acceptable trade-off (10, 11) and use the studies' conclusions to justify proceeding with mining projects instead of rejecting them (10).

Mining projects are antithetical to protected areas. Mineral extraction causes irreversible environmental impacts, including biodiversity loss, habitat fragmentation, and pollution (3). Moreover, rehabilitation efforts in mining have revealed a weak understanding of key ecosystem processes, resilience, and threats to ecosystem persistence (12).

African countries should reject all mining projects within protected area boundaries rather than conduct environmental assessments to evaluate them. CBD members should amend Article 14 to clarify that environmental assessments should take place only for proposed activities with objectives that are compatible with protected area goals, such as low-density eco-tourism, conservation and rehabilitation efforts, research, and routine park management. Limiting the types of activities that are eligible for environmental assessment would prevent governments from using the process as a tool to legitimize profitable but unsustainable activities.

Reece Alberts<sup>1\*</sup>, Francois Retief<sup>1</sup>, Alan Bond<sup>1,2</sup>, Claudine Roos<sup>1</sup>, Dirk Cilliers<sup>1</sup>

Uranium mines have been approved for operation inside Namibia's Namib-Naukluft National Park.

<sup>1</sup>Protected Areas Research Group, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa. <sup>2</sup>School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

\*Corresponding author.

Email: reece.alberts@nwu.ac.za

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## Mpox prevention in low-income countries

On 23 July 2022, in response to the rapid spread of monkeypox (mpox), the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (1). The emergency status was lifted in May 2023 but was restored on 14 August 2024, signaling the reemergence of the virus (2). To prevent a mpox pandemic, scientists and the public must recognize the importance of supporting the low-income countries that remain the most vulnerable, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Mpox is divided into two clades: Clade I is endemic to Central Africa, and clade II is endemic to West Africa (3). The global outbreak that began in 2022 was driven by clade II, which is known for causing milder symptoms (3). In 2024, the more severe clade I has devastated the DRC. As of 1 November, the DRC reported 42,912 cases and 1132 deaths, resulting in a case fatality rate of 2.6% (4). Third-generation smallpox vaccines were approved in 2022 to prevent mpox, but at USD 50 to 75 per dose, they remain cost-prohibitive for

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the DRC and other low-income countries (3, 5). As a result, these nations rely on direct donations from developed countries and vaccine manufacturers, as well as on purchases facilitated by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and by the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (5).

The slogan "No one is safe until everyone is safe," which resonated widely during the COVID-19 pandemic (6), is just as relevant to the growing mpox outbreaks. Mpox has plagued the DRC for decades but received substantial international attention only after it began to threaten neighboring countries (5, 7). This reactive approach to global health is deeply flawed and dangerous.

To prevent future pandemics, the international community must shift to a more proactive and equitable strategy. All countries, regardless of their economic status, must have timely access to vaccines, health care infrastructure, early detection systems, and ongoing research into diseases that disproportionately affect them. Achieving this goal will require coordinated efforts led by global health organizations such as the WHO, in collaboration with governments, nongovernmental organizations, and public-private partnerships. Funding could be sourced from international donors, high-income countries, and global health initiatives such as Gavi and the Global Fund. Evidence-based assessments of disease burden, equity considerations, and the potential impact of proposed interventions should inform decisions about the prioritization of funding and resources. Supporting countries like the DRC in their battle against infectious diseases is not only a moral imperative but also a practical necessity for global health security.

Xin Yu Yang<sup>1</sup>, Gong Jie Zhang<sup>2</sup>, Ya Bin Zhou<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Dermatology, Beijing Tongren Hospital, Capital Medical University, Beijing, China.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Dermatology, Beijing Chaoyang Hospital, Capital Medical University, Beijing, China.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Dermatology, Beijing Children's Hospital, Capital Medical University, National Center for Children's Health, Beijing, China.

\*Corresponding author. Email: chouyabin@163.com

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#### ERRATA

**Erratum for the Review "The microbiome and human cancer"** by G. D. Sepich-Poore *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eadt2260 (2024).

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10.1126/science.adt2260

**Erratum for the Research Article "Where and with whom does a brief social-belonging intervention promote progress in college?"** by G. M. Walton *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eads9718 (2024).

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**Erratum for the Research Article "Defining the KRAS- and ERK-dependent transcriptome in KRAS-mutant cancers"** by J. A. Klomp *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eads4435 (2024).

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10.1126/science.ads4435

**Erratum for the Research Article "Anthropogenic amplification of precipitation variability over the past century"** by W. Zhang *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eads2671 (2024).

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**Erratum for the Report "Sphingosine-1-phosphate as a ligand for the G protein-coupled receptor EDG-1"** by M.-J. Lee *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eadr9977 (2024).

Published 1 August 2024  
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**Erratum for the Report "Kinetics of dCas9 target search in Escherichia coli"** by D. L. Jones *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eadr6422 (2024).

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**Erratum for the Research Article "The lysosomal Rag-Ragulator complex licenses RIPK1-and Caspase-8-mediated pyroptosis by Yersinia"** by Z. Zheng *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eadr5480 (2024).

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10.1126/science.adr5480

**Erratum for the Research Article "Single-cell RNA-seq reveals cell type-specific molecular and genetic associations to lupus"** by R. K. Perez *et al.*, *Science* **385**, eadr4064 (2024).

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10.1126/science.adr4064

**Erratum for the Research Article "Spin-mediated promotion of Co catalysts for ammonia synthesis"** by K. Zhang *et al.*, *Science* **384**, eadr1519 (2024).

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