

LETTER OF COUNTRY ENDORSEMENT
BY DESIGNATED OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT

Telegrams: FOTANCC, Lilongwe
Telephone: Lilongwe 782 199
Telex: 44407
Fax: 781 679

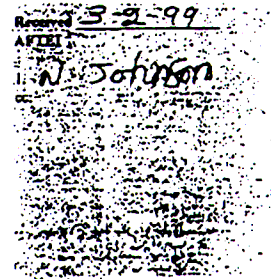


MINISTRY OF FINANCE
P.O. BOX 30049
LILONGWE 3
MALAWI

REF. NO.32/1/

2nd March, 1999

The World Bank
1818H Street N. W.:
Washington D. C. 20433
U.S.A.
(Attention : Ms. Cynthia Cook)



Dear Sir,

**MULANJE MOUNTAIN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PROJECT (GEF -
PPG TF028356)**

As you are aware, the GEF/World Bank granted a sum of US\$300,000.00 as a Project Preparation Grant to prepare the above mentioned Project. The preparation process of the project has now been completed and requires GEF funding.

We wish to advise the Bank that the Government of Malawi supports the Project and would be grateful if the project could be financially supported by GEF through the Bank.

Your usual assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. M. Sibande', written over a horizontal line.

McCallum M. M. Sibande
For: **THE SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY**

Copy : The Secretary for Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental
Affairs, Lilongwe 3.

Additional Biodiversity Information

Mulanje Mountain, located in south-eastern Malawi, lies between latitudes 15°50'-16°03'S and longitudes 35°30'-35°47'E. It extends over 640 sq. km. (64 000 hectares) and its precipitous flanks rise from an average 700m to 3 002m above sea level. It is the highest mountain in south-central Africa. The mountain is an area of afro-montane vegetation and has a large number of endemic flora and fauna species, many of which are endangered or threatened by extinction. The massif is completely surrounded by villages, small-scale cultivation, and tea estates. There is a marked difference in the annual geographic distribution of rainfall ranging from about 300mm in the rain shadow of the massif's southwest section to almost 3 000mm on the Lichenya Plateau. Drainage is radial and the mountain serves as the source of headwaters for nine rivers.

The massif's dominant vegetation varies with altitude, relief, aspect, rock form, soils, and incidence of fire. It ranges from the **miombo** woodlands dominated by *Brachystegia* species at its base to afro-montane forest near its summit. An analysis of the predominant vegetation composition indicated that the afro-montane indicator species increase from 22% of total species in the lowland forest to 44% in the mid-altitude forest to 76% at altitudes between 1600m and 1950m on the upper slopes and plateaus. A fire-induced grassland dominates on the massifs plateaus, broken only by forested ravines and gullies.

The following six different plant communities exist on the mountain: (1) The High Altitude Zone (2400m to 3000m above sea level) which includes the endemic grass *Aloeachete oreogena*, *Aloe arborescense*, *Aloe mawii*, *Helichrysum whyteanum* (Whyte's Everlasting Sun Flower) and *Xerophytica splendens* (Stag Horn Lily); (2) The Plateau Grassland Zone (1800 to 2200m.a.s.l.) which contains many temperate species, including *Erica johnstonia* and *Morea schimperi* (Mulanje Iris) both of which are endemic; (3) The Montane Evergreen Forest Zone (1675 to 2500 m.a.s.l.) which is dominated by the *Widdringtonia cupressoides* (Mulanje Cedar, the National Tree) and *Olea capensis*; (4) The Mid-Altitude Evergreen Forest Zone (900 to 1500 m.a.s.l.) whose forests comprise *Newtonia buchananii*, *Chrysophllum gorungosum* and *Podocarpus* with a rich understorey; (5) The Relic Lowland Semi-Evergreen Forest Zone (600 to 950m.a.s.l.) which is dominated by *Khaya anthotheca*, *Adine microcephale* and *Newtonia buchananii*; and (6) The Closed Canopy Miombo Woodland Zone (700 to 900 m.a.s.l.) which is dominated by *Brachystegia* spp.

Mulanje Mountain is one of Africa's key sites for threatened bird species. Its forests are part of the Tanganyika-Nyasa Mountain Group Endemic Bird Area (EBA) which includes the mountains between south-eastern Kenya and northern Mozambique, and support four of the 35 restricted-range bird species of the EBA. Three of the EBA species occurring in the mountain are the endangered Thyolo Alethe (*Alethe cholonsis*), the rare spotted ground-thrush (*Turdus fischeri*), and the white-winged Apalis (*Apalis chariessa*). The massif's habitat has 250 bird species, 41 of which are endemic. Mount Mulanje also has the largest number of forest butterflies found in Malawi (118 species, five of which are endemic), nine species of endemic reptiles, two endemic amphibians and one endemic mollusc. Other studies indicate similar endemism or very restricted distribution in the highlands and high rainfall areas with respect to species of various fauna of the lower tetrapods and fishes. However, the vast herds of herbivores that once roamed the wooded foot of the mountain and the grazers of the open grassy areas are no longer seen. The only antelopes that survive are those that live hidden in dense vegetation, like the bushbuck and duikers, or find refuge on steep rock, like klipspringers. The few prey species that survive on the mountain like the leopards are under extreme pressure due to dwindling food source and as a result of being hunted for their skin.

The first published account of Mulanje's vegetation was that of Alexander Whyte in 1891 whose collections include the Mulanje Cedar (*Widdringtonia cupressoides*) and two *Erica* species. There are over 600 species of vegetation, of which 41 are endemic non-flowering and flowering trees, shrubs, and herbs in the six different plant communities. Due to its high endemism, Mt. Mulanje was identified by the World Wildlife Fund as one of 20 areas in the world for the conservation of biodiversity. It was designated as an Afrotropical Regional Centre of Endemism: CPD site AF64. As a result of Mulanje Mountain's uniqueness as a special ecosystem of international importance, rich in plant and animal life, the massif has also been included among the World Heritage Sites as designated by UNESCO.

The timber and fuelwood plantations (making up only about 8% of the massif's area) are managed according to the Forestry Department Planning Unit recommendations. Pine plantations were established on the Chambe plateau and Likhubula (575 ha), Fort Lister (657 ha), Muloza drift (1 298 ha) to produce timber. *Eucalyptus* plantations at Nanchidwa (2,800 ha) were established in 1980 under the World Bank Wood Energy Project around parts of the reserve boundary to provide fuelwood and poles and to stop encroachment. There are 40 licensed pine pit sawyers.