

AFRICAN ENERGY CHAMBER · PIPELINE

UK High Court Challenge to EACOP Tests African Energy Sovereignty and Pipeline Progress

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Four Ugandan farmers have initiated legal proceedings in the UK High Court against the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), targeting EACOP Ltd., the project's UK-registered operating company. The claimants are seeking to apply Ugandan constitutional, environmental, and climate legislation through the British court system — a jurisdictional move that has drawn sharp criticism from the African Energy Chamber and broader voices within the African energy community. The case was filed just months before a key scheduled milestone for the project, adding legal uncertainty to an already complex development timeline.

The African Energy Chamber has responded forcefully, arguing that UK courts have no legitimate mandate to determine Uganda's energy future. The Chamber's position reflects a wider sentiment gaining traction across Sub-Saharan Africa: that externally driven legal and financial pressure on African energy infrastructure projects constitutes a form of sovereignty infringement. From the Chamber's perspective, Ugandan courts, regulators, and constitutional frameworks are the appropriate venues for adjudicating domestic energy disputes — not foreign jurisdictions responding to internationally coordinated advocacy campaigns.

EACOP is one of the most strategically significant pipeline projects currently under development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Running from Uganda's Lake Albert oil fields through Tanzania to the port of Tanga on the Indian Ocean coast, the pipeline is designed to unlock landlocked crude reserves that have been awaiting commercial

development for over a decade. The project has faced persistent headwinds, including financing challenges linked to ESG-driven withdrawal by several European banks, as well as sustained campaigns by environmental groups targeting both the pipeline's route and its climate implications. The UK court action represents the latest front in this multi-jurisdictional pressure campaign.

For the African Energy Chamber and project proponents, the legal challenge raises fundamental questions about who holds decision-making authority over African resource development. Supporters of EACOP argue that the pipeline represents a legitimate exercise of national resource sovereignty and a critical economic development pathway for Uganda and Tanzania. They contend that blocking or delaying the project through foreign legal mechanisms undermines democratic institutions and the rule of law within the countries most directly affected.

The outcome of the UK High Court proceedings — including whether the court accepts jurisdiction — will be closely watched across the region. A ruling that allows the case to proceed on its merits could set a precedent with far-reaching implications for other African energy projects with corporate structures or financing arrangements tied to European entities. Conversely, a jurisdictional dismissal would reinforce the argument that African energy governance should remain within African legal systems. Either way, the case is likely to influence how future African energy projects structure their corporate and financing arrangements to manage extraterritorial legal exposure.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

EACOP remains a live pipeline infrastructure opportunity for Norwegian companies with expertise in long-distance crude oil pipeline engineering, construction support, and project management. Partners should monitor the UK court proceedings closely, as a jurisdictional ruling will materially affect project timeline certainty and financing structure — both of which gate contracting activity. Norwegian service companies with existing presence in East Africa should maintain stakeholder relationships and be prepared to mobilise if legal headwinds ease and the project advances toward construction.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Pipeline:** EACOP's construction phase, if it clears legal and financing hurdles, represents a direct opportunity for Norwegian pipeline engineering and construction support firms to bid on technical service packages.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** Upstream Lake Albert field development tied to EACOP offtake volumes may require additional production infrastructure investment, worth monitoring for future FPSO or processing equipment opportunities.
- **Service:** Norwegian legal and project risk advisory firms can offer value to EACOP stakeholders navigating extraterritorial litigation exposure and cross-border corporate structuring challenges.
- **Drilling:** Sustained development drilling in the Lake Albert basin remains contingent on EACOP progress; Norwegian drilling contractors should track the pipeline's legal status as a proxy for upstream activity timing.

[Original source: African Energy Chamber →](#)

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