

## CONCERNED CITIZENS OF ATEWA LANDSCAPE

NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFFO ADDO,  
(PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA)

21<sup>st</sup> January 2020

**It is not too late to do the right thing: Abandon all plans to mine bauxite in Atewa and Secure it for water, biodiversity and long-term wellbeing.**

The President of the Republic of Ghana, H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo, in his inaugural address on the occasion of his swearing in as President of the republic and commander-in-chief of the Ghana Armed Forces; advised Ghanaians to be citizens and not spectators, building OUR COMMUNITIES and NATION.

We, the Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape, are inspired by this admonishment and have decided NOT to be spectators, but CITIZENS building OUR COMMUNITIES first and then our NATION

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We represent the 48 communities surrounding the ATEWA FOREST and we fear greatly that our communities are being threatened by the unpopular decision of the President and the present government to mine bauxite in the ATEWA FOREST

A decision that is detrimental to the forest and its numerous biological diversity

Atewa Forest is the finest example of Upland Evergreen Forest in the Upper Guinean Forest region, with over 70 species classified as Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. It has at least 50 species of mammals; Over 1,000 species of plants; 230 species of birds; and Over 570 species of butterflies

The MOST worrying threat is the destruction of water bodies including the THE THREE MAJOR RIVERS that take their sources from the Atewa Forest, i.e. Birim, Ayensu and Densu. Yet, the politicians keep saying they will mine bauxite without affecting the water bodies

Already, the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC) has entered the forest to explore and drilled 53 points where the bauxite mining will take place, claiming the bauxite mining will take place at

the northern part of the forest and will not affect the major river bodies in the southern part. Interestingly, the water table at specific area being referred to is such that when you dig 3 metres deep, you will meet water. The bauxite is 6 meters deep and beyond; so the obvious conclusion is that the water will be reached before the bauxite is extracted. Now the question is What happens to this water.

Funny enough, only the exploration process has passed through about 6 tributaries of the rivers in the forest, namely Pusupusu River, Supon River, Obeyaa Stream, Akoosi Stream, Twafour Stream and Afrancho Stream. This means that obviously, water will be affected; and the danger starts with our communities. Note that the head waters of the Supon River on which the pumping station of the Asiakwa community sit and which supply water to over 3,000 residents, also falls within the catchment

Let us also quickly add that, the exploration and drilling process alone has destroyed a total land area of over one hundred hectares, specifically 101.165 Hectares. This is equivalent to over 100 football pitches. This area is even bigger than the area that GIADEC indicated will be the size of the whole mining activity in their meeting with the Press. This is shameful. All happening without any Environmental Impact Assessment and flouting existing environmental regulations.

We are asking the **FORESTRY COMMISSION**, where are all the trees that stood on the over 100 Hectares of land? How much of the money generated from felling of these trees went back into any of these communities for development? And what will happen to all the animals that used these trees as

their abode. The Commission was set up to ensure that we have better and much more natural resources than we inherited, but right now, the Commission has become **DEFORESTATION COMMISSION NOT FORESTRY COMMISSION AND THIS IS SHAMEFUL**. Your eager connivance to destroy this unique ecosystem is appalling and we demand that your leadership resigns as clearly you do not know what your true mandate as a Commission is. As we have indicated, it is never too late to do the right thing, so we entreat you to protect the forest and advise the government appropriately.

We wish to also remind Your Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo, that your appointment as co-chair of the Eminent Group of Sustainable Development Goals Advocates mandates you to support the UN Secretary General in his efforts to generate momentum and commitment to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

We are almost 100% sure that if you supervise the mining of Bauxite in the Atewa Forest, which is a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area, you put your integrity and that of the UN Secretary General at stake since the achievement of nine out of the seventeen goals including SDGs 1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16 will be impossible.

We hereby also use the opportunity to petition the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres to add his voice to the fight against bauxite mining in Ghana's Atewa Forest.

We finally want to petition His Royal Highness, Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panyin II, to please add his voice the fight against bauxite mining in the Atewa Forest and advocate for the Government to rather upgrade the status of the forest to a National Park

To the investor community, you better watch out because we as concerned citizens will resist every effort of yours to mine bauxite in the Atewa Forest. It will be better if you invested in eco-tourism which the forest presents a great potential

To our colleague community members who are not yet convinced to join the fight, let me refer you to some West Asian Fable which goes like this:

**“The forest was shrinking but the trees kept voting for the axe. For the axe was clever and convinced the trees that because his handle was wood, he was one of them. A word to the wise is enough”**

In conclusion, as Ansel Adams put it, "It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment", yet we have no option but to save the environment for posterity

We therefore urge your excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akkuffo Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, to rescind the decision of mining the Atewa Forest, but rather declare Atewa Forest to the world as a National Park, exemplary and deserving of your position as Co-Chair to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Atewa as a National Park would be a lasting, positive legacy for the Government of Ghana. This option has great public support amongst forest edge communities, and would honour Ghana's commitment to the international Convention on Biological Diversity and to the Sustainable Development Goals. This is in stark contrast to the loss that would be experienced should the hills be mined.

We also call on all Ghanaians home and abroad to join this fight so we can secure our last remaining watershed for generations to come.

Atewa Forest and its services, mined today, lost forever.

Signed

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