

NOTICE: For the attention of mining companies bidding for bauxite mining concessions in Ghana's Atewa Forest

Friends of the Earth-Ghana, A Rocha Ghana, the Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape and the Green Livelihoods Alliance would like to bring to the attention of all companies interested in bidding for bauxite mining concessions in Ghana's Atewa Forest that the prospect of bauxite mining in this legally protected forest is highly contested by local communities, national civil society organisations and international conservation organisations. The intention is to warn mining companies to be mindful of this dissent and of the damage that mining activities will cause to the Atewa Forest.

According to a statement issued by the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC), it has launched and completed the first stage of investor engagement rounds to select strategic investors to partner the Corporation in the development of the nation's bauxite assets. We are subsequently informed that 19 companies have expressed interest so far. Disappointingly, there has been a serious lack of transparency such that civil society and local communities have not been included in this process, especially with regards to the Atewa Forest. Nevertheless, we believe it is not too late to bring these concerns to your attention through this notice. Making a few facts clear to you now should, we believe, make you reconsider your interest in bidding for bauxite mining concessions in the Atewa Forest.

1. This notice is first and foremost to warn you that the Atewa Forest is currently a highly contested site due to the significant and growing threat of bauxite mining. As such, any mining company that has already made or is considering making a bid for a concession there should be mindful that the campaign to protect Atewa Forest from bauxite mining is gaining momentum. This dissent is coming from local communities living in and around the forest, led by the Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape, who have expressed deep resentment to any bauxite mining in their forest. Their livelihoods, food security, and water security all rely on the forest's resources. The forest also has socio-cultural significance for the communities as it contains their Sacred Groves, used for fetish rituals, and the burial sites of Chiefs and community members that ensure their spirits remain connected to the forest. The communities' deeply held dissent will not go away. They have been demonstrating their aversion to bauxite mining through many peaceful actions: they have walked 95km carrying precious clean water from the heart of the Atewa Forest to Ghana's government to highlight the forest's significance as a source of fresh water for Ghanaians. They have also held demonstrations, protest marches and press conferences in the Atewa Forest and in Accra. They have delivered petitions and statements to government demanding it excludes Atewa Forest from any bauxite mining agreement. They will not give up their precious Atewa forest. It is a highly contested domain.

2. This dissent is supported and promoted within Ghana and across the world by national and international civil society and conservation organisations that also contest government's plans to mine Atewa Forest for bauxite. These organisations include A Rocha Ghana, the Green Livelihoods Alliance, Friends of the Earth Ghana, World Wildlife Fund for Nature, International Union for the Conservation of

Nature, Birdlife International, Global Wildlife Conservation and many more. And this network of dissent is growing across the world. This is because the Atewa Forest is Ghana's most important ecological asset and a globally significant biodiversity reserve. It is one of the world's Key Biodiversity Areas harbouring over 100 rare and endangered wildlife species, many that will be threatened with extinction if the forest is mined for bauxite. It also provides critical ecosystem and life support services such as potable water for 5 million people, clean air, and climate change mitigation and resilience. Due to its local, national and global significance, the Atewa Range Forest Reserve is protected from mining and other damaging developments by Ghana's 1927 Forest Act (CAP 157).

3. The Ghana government has made a promise that any mining in the Atewa Forest will not be close to water sources and will in no way affect any watersheds or rivers. However, three major rivers rise in the Atewa Forest that provide water for local communities and around 5 million Ghanaians living in Greater Accra. Clearly it will not be possible to mine Atewa Forest without affecting these critical water sources. Even if mining is kept away from the rivers' headwaters, as the government intends, the mining will cause heavy metals to leach from the disturbed soils that will then be washed into the water sources, polluting them with dangerous heavy metals. These heavy metals cannot be cleared from the water by boiling. They cause a wide range of illnesses and damaging health impacts including nervous system damage, dementia and cancer.

4. In response to civil society concerns over the irreversible damage that bauxite mining will cause in the Atewa Forest if permitted to go ahead, the Ghana government has promised it will only allow responsible, sustainable and 'environmentally friendly mining practices' to be used there. This, the government argues, will not damage the forest, biodiversity or ecological services the forest provides. However, since bauxite mining requires the complete removal of the forest, vegetation and top soil leaving only a desert of red mud in its wake, it appears impossible to mine bauxite in a biodiverse forest in an 'environmentally friendly' way. As far as we are aware, no technology exists for mining bauxite in a way that does not disturb the forest or wildlife or damage the quality of life of communities dependent on the forest's resources. Furthermore, as mining companies should already be aware, the 'Sustainable Bauxite Mining Guidelines' developed by the International Aluminium Institute state that one of the measures for the 'mitigation of biodiversity impacts' is '**Avoiding designated protected areas**'. The Atewa Forest is a designated protected Forest Reserve, and mining it would therefore not fulfil the government's promise of mining Ghana's bauxite in a responsible sustainable way and would also not conform to the Sustainable Bauxite Mining espoused by the International Aluminium Institute.

We thank you for your kind attention to these concerns relating to the highly contested Atewa Forest and the Ghana government's plans to mine it for bauxite. We hope you will heed our warning and NOT bid for, or will withdraw any existing bid, for a bauxite concession within the protected Atewa Range Forest Reserve.

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