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# Press Statement

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## **RECONSIDER TARGETING ATEWA FOREST RESERVE FOR BAUXITE MINING IN GHANA-CHINA DEAL**

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On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 2017, the Vice President of Ghana, H. E Dr. Bawumia returned from a trip to China and announced a partnership deal with the Government of China. The deal, currently the largest partnership agreement between an African Country and China, is a 15 Billion dollar facility. In this deal, the Government of Ghana is seeking to leverage Ghana's natural resources, such as the 2.8 billion metric tonnes of iron ore deposits, 960 million metric tonnes of bauxite, 413 million metric tonnes of Manganese and not to mention Gold and Cocoa. Specifically the deal targets bauxite deposits beneath the Atewa Forest Reserve in Kyebi and the Tano Offin Forest Reserve at Nyinahin both estimated at 960, Million metric tonnes. This in all respects is good for the economy but there are several aspects of the deal that is bad for the environment.

According to the Vice President of Ghana, Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia, the country needs about \$20 billion to embark on a massive infrastructure development intended to address country's need for energy, jobs, roads, sanitation and water supply.

Without dwelling on the frenzy this partnership has generated, and the usual and expected banter between the two major political parties, the NPP and the NDC, we as civil society coalition have seen it necessary to draw government's attention to certain aspects of the Ghana-China deal.

Specifically our concern relates to the intention of government to leverage bauxite reserves in Atewa Range Forest Reserves, as part of several other places identified under the deal.

In stating this, we need to make it categorically clear that as a coalition we are not against the government of Ghana going into any financial agreement, local or international, and also not against government of Ghana mining bauxite in Ghana. Actually, Ghana has enough bauxite deposits explored and unexplored with major deposits in Awaso, Mt Ejuanema, and Odumpra Bepo, aside Nyinahin and Kyebi, according to the Minerals Commission. Additionally, there minor deposits in eight (8) other places scattered across the Eastern, Western and Ashanti Regions of Ghana.

This said, we as a coalition are concerned about government plans to leverage bauxite reserves in sensitive ecosystems in Ghana, mostly designated as forest reserves, particularly the Atewa Range located in Kyebi. Knowing very well the importance of forests to Ghana and particularly the spectacular and unparalleled benefits and significance of Atewa Forest to the people of Ghana as well as to the global community, we are still at a loss why government will leverage such priceless assets as part of its international financial bargaining chip.



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For the benefit of Ghanaians who do not know about this spectacular Atewa Forest, let me share some insights on the what and where Atewa Range is.

The Atewa Range, consist of the second highest peaks in Ghana and is located 90km north of Accra (that is roughly about 2 hours drive from Accra), in the Eastern Region of Ghana. A large tract of the Reserve area straddles the East Akyem Municipal Assembly which has Kyebi as its Municipal Capital. Atewa Range is the source of three important rivers, the Densu, Birim and Ayensu, providing water for adjacent communities and downstream users in the greater Accra region. The rivers from Atewa Forest feed the Weija Reservoir in Accra, which is managed and treated by the Ghana Water Company Ltd to ensure 3 million people in Accra get access to clean water on a daily basis.

For communities on the outskirts of Accra, who do not have access to potable drinking water, the rivers and streams from Atewa Forest ensures that more than 2 million more people are also able to access fresh clean water.

If you are regular traveller on the Accra-Kumasi highway, am sure you recognise this magnificent place where clouds descend and are in constant embrace with the forests and mountains.

As I have earlier mentioned, Atewa Range is a very special place, irreplaceable and not comparable to any place in Ghana and for which reason we are calling on government to spare Atewa Range forest from bauxite mining now and in the future.

There are a billion very good reasons why government should heed our call and without delay expunge Atewa Range Forest out of the Ghana-China deal

The major reasons for our call to take Atewa Forest off the deal are as follows:

1. Atewa is unique and irreplaceable and without doubt the most important water tower in Ghana providing water for 5 million Ghanaians on a daily basis. The forest is headwaters for three main streams, the Birim, the Ayensu and the Densu providing water to millions of Ghanaians in three regions, that is; the Eastern, Central and Western Regions of Ghana. As indicated above, without Atewa, there will be no Weija and no water for the people of Nsawam.
2. Atewa Forest contains unique and rich biodiversity and is recognized as a Global Significant Biodiversity Area. It is home to a large diversity of plants and animals, including 228 species of birds, 52 species of mammals and 32 species of amphibians. This forest is home to certain species of plants and animals known to occur only in Atewa and nowhere else in the world. In his Pulitzer prize winning book, Half Earth, the renowned American biologist and father of "biodiversity" describes Atewa Forest as the finest example of upland forest in West Africa.
3. Atewa Forest holds longstanding cultural importance for the Akyem Abuakwa people and has a rich cultural heritage. The Okyenhene of Akyem Abuakwa, Osagyefuo Nana Amoatia Ofori Panin II, has expressed his



commitment to the protection of Atewa Forest and his desire to see it become a National Park.

4. The majority of the largely agrarian communities in the eastern region and also dependents in Accra have called for the need to upgrade the Forest Range into a National Park.
5. Research conducted in consultation with several local and international natural economist for a one year long period indicates that the provisioning services of the Atewa Forest and its surrounding landscape is critical for millions of people and worth millions financially. According to the study, of various development scenario's, effective protection of the forest yields the greatest economic value - US\$1.157 billion, over a 30-year period - to local communities, downstream residents and the national treasury compared to scenarios that include mining.
6. The services and values that Atewa Forest provides include; water for millions of Ghanaians with a total value of \$28.1 million, Non-timber products estimated at \$12.4 million, Climate amelioration services with estimated reduction of emissions of c. 200,000 tonnes of carbon per year, Tourism services estimated to be over \$5 million, cocoa farming estimated at \$9.3 million on annual basis. Further details of this report 'The Economics of Atewa Range Forest' are available online for your download and reference.
7. Additionally, there is a broad support from various stakeholders – state institutions and agencies, national and international NGOs, donors, and businesses – to upgrade Atewa Range Forest Reserve to that of a National Park. This is manifested by various investments, initiatives and multi-stakeholder alliance building, particularly over the last 3 years.
8. Again, Ghana has committed to conserve protected areas and other sites of known importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services. These commitments are enshrined in numerous international agreements to which Ghana is a party, including the Convention on Biological Diversity ratified by Ghana in 1992; UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, ratified by Ghana in September 2016, which entered into force in Ghana in November 2016; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The present deal with the Chinese, which seeks to leverage bauxite lying beneath forests and vegetated off-reserve areas will work against our own Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement submitted during COP 21.

We have seen the commitment of this government to halting environmental destructive activities polluting our water bodies. We share in the struggle together and still remain committed to support government in securing our water bodies for today and tomorrow. In the same vein, we are counting on the government to do the



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right thing and safeguard our natural assets and heritage for today and generations yet to come.

In conclusion, we have a few requests and proposals for the government of Ghana.

Our requests:

1. We are requesting government to as a matter of urgency to expunge Atewa Range Forest in Kyebi out of the deal with the Chinese. The Snr Minister has already indicated that Atewa is not on the list, but has also indicated a possibility of mining close to the range. This latter statement is not convincing enough and we ask for complete delisting of Atewa Range from the bauxite deal. In outlining what the money will be used for, the Vice President, further reiterated the fact that government will be leveraging on the Nyinahin and Kyebi Bauxite. This is worrying and inconsistent with the statement by the Snr Minister Osafo Marfo. We hope the government is very aware of the cliché, "...not all that glitters is gold" and that there are some things, that just can't be traded for all the money in the world. Our forests and particularly Atewa Forest Reserve is one such asset and heritage that cannot be traded.
2. Again in furtherance to entrenching Ghana's commitment to the SDGs particularly goals 6, 13 and 15, the government of Ghana should declare Atewa Range Forest Reserve as a National Park. This will certainly be the most lasting legacy generations will forever remember this administration for, together with bringing to a halt the activities of galamsey all over the country.
3. In respect of the request for the Atewa National Park, the government of Ghana needs to be aware that, plans are far advanced, with affirmed international commitment to support green development pathways, such as eco-tourism development, and sustainable cocoa production in agro-forestry systems within the Atewa Landscape to promote long-term water provisioning services, reduce poverty and contribute to socio-economic development within the region.

Just as the Vice President Said, 'Ghana is indeed ready for big things' Yes and we agree. That said, we need government to be mindful of the fact that the kind of big things we need is green investments that enhances our natural capital without compromising the ability of futures generations access to a healthy and sustainable environment.



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Our Proposals to Government to harness the outstanding wealth of Atewa Range Forest are as follows:

1. Our vision is of an Atewa Living Landscape: with thriving communities at whose heart is its greatest natural asset – the Atewa Forest – protected in perpetuity and also provides economic benefits. This vision has broad support locally, nationally and internationally. It serves Ghana well, and offers a significant legacy for the current administration, especially on this 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Republic of Ghana that the Government has dedicated to the environment. It is a vision for an integrated landscape that respects the region's history, its environment and its people, and one that bring development to the region in a sustainable way.
2. The main characteristics will be a flagship national park, with a thriving tourism industry that supports the operation of the National Park and brings much needed income to the surrounding communities. The wider landscape around the National Park forms an enterprise zone where land use practices that support the forest are encouraged from natural forest restoration to agro-forestry and commercial reforestation. This will constitute the crucial basis for a protected watershed for millions of people living downstream in the Eastern, Central and Greater Accra regions, as well as the residents of Kyebi and its environs, clean, safe, dependable and affordable domestic water. It will also provide the conditions for a viable agro-industrial sector within the landscape.

To achieve this we propose the following roadmap.

1. We ask the H. E the President to use his Executive Power to declare Atewa as a National Park. This provides security and stability for the implementation of subsequent activities including investments in ecotourism, agro-forestry and livelihood improvements. Designation can be achieved through an Executive instrument.
2. The government should work in partnership with key stakeholders to develop a landscape master plan, including a protected area management plan and buffer zone plan, including hydrology and reforestation.
3. Put in place a sustainable financing process to implement sustainable use options, including ecotourism, selling carbon emissions offsets in the voluntary market, sustainable forestry and certified cocoa.

Thank you.

**Signed By:**

A Rocha Ghana  
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