

12 July 2018

For Immediate Release

To All Media Agencies

Secure Atewa Forest for Prosperity, Wellbeing and Resilient Communities

Economic emancipation forms part of the cardinal pillars of any visionary leader. Today, we are happy to observe that H.E President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo not being an exception and a great visionary, has since, his swearing in on the 7th of January, 2017 demonstrated his government's commitment to put Ghana on a path of prosperity and on an agenda of 'Ghana Beyond Aid'.

In an effort to achieve these goals, H. E President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo has not relented in the pursuit of an enhanced standard of living for the Ghanaian populace. In this direction, the government has shown its intention to exploit the bauxite reserves of the Ghana, as an integral and important part of its development. Although a laudable and bold venture, it has limited promise. Even more disturbing of this bauxite development agenda is government plans to target places like Atewa Forest, a water tower and jewel in the crown of Ghana's forest, without recourse to due diligence, the welfare and wellbeing of the people of the Atewa landscape. For the record we of the Concerned Citizens of the Atewa landscape beg to differ. In as much as we support the President's plans to exploit the bauxite resources of this country, we reject any attempts to target Atewa Forests, which is our heritage, and source of water for over 7 Municipalities and District Assemblies in the Eastern Region and specifically providing water to over 5 million Ghanaians.

The Atewa forest occupies a pride of place in the ecological hearts of not only Ghanaians but the whole world at large. The economic importance of the Range far supersedes the value of revenue of foreign exchange that the mining of bauxite is envisaged to give.

Much has been said on the importance and uniqueness of the Atewa forest by both the local and international institutions and personalities and we of the Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape share and appreciate the priceless provisions and functions this forest provides. As such we stand for and support the long-term conservation of the Atewa Forest range as a National Park and a heritage site.

As concerned citizens of this landscape we have embarked on a series of advocacy actions and activities to urge the government to rescind its decision to carry out the mining of bauxite in the Atewa Forest. Despite a number of advocacy activities ranging from the 95km walk from Kyebi to the Accra with a petition presented to the Government and the numerous petitions and discourses culminating in the meeting with Prof. Frimpong Boateng the Minister of Environment Science and Technology, the Nana Addo led government has kept a very cold stance and treaded the path of non-disclosure.

It needs mentioning, that even apart from what we described as the modest figure of over the 5 million people who will be deprived of potable water as a result of the proposed destruction of the Atewa Range of Forest and the ultimate pollution of rivers Densu, Ayensu and Birim, we can without any hesitation observe that mining in Ghana has not benefited the very people whose living standards the activity is supposed to enhance. Akwatia still remains a shanty town despite the mining of diamond in the community and its environs. Obuasi is an apology of a community with gold production second to South Africa on the continent and the government has had to throw in its might in the effort to salvage Obuasi mines.

Already illegal small scale mining, 'galamsey' as it is locally called, has done irreparable damage to both flora and fauna in every community where this activity has taken place across the length and breadth of the country. The mining of bauxite has not been any different. At Awaso a town so often mentioned in our history books is a far cry of a community which has hosted a bauxite mine for close to 78 years. To the people of Awaso, rain water cannot even be harvested for drinking and anyone who risks drinking such water sings his or her own funeral dirge. In knowing one's future, one cannot forget the past and hence the priceless value of

hindsight. With Awaso in mind, one can clearly picture the future of the many towns around the Atewa.

Mr. President, as concerned citizens, we are not against any developmental agenda of the government for the area in particular and the whole country in general, but we question the sustainability of such developmental agenda as far as the economic emancipation of the communities are concerned. Mr. President you bear with us that, our call is in consonance with the global Sustainable Development Goals, to which we are proud to see you nominated as a Co-Chair. As we speak, the world is meeting in New York in a High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals with the theme **“Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”**. Mr. President, I am sure, as a Co-Chair for the SDGs you are aware that mining bauxite in a forest that is the source of water to over 5 million people and a haven of biodiversity, some found nowhere else in the world, is definitely not the transformation towards sustainable and resilient and prosperous nation that you seek to build.

Since sustainability runs through all the SDG goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, and 17 then a holistic, critical due diligence must be done before promising to mine our watersheds.

Mr. President the following provides information on the critical role of Atewa Forest for helping Ghana achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and catapulting Ghana Beyond Aid, building a prosperous and resilient communities within the Atewa landscape.

- Atewa Forest contributes to Goal 6 by providing clean water to 5 million Ghanaians. Clean access to potable water is critical to achieving national development goals on sanitation, crucial to promoting national wellbeing.
- Atewa Forest contributes to Goal 11 by making local communities safe, resilient and sustainable through the provision of resources necessary for basic needs, sustenance, health, welfare and sustainable green livelihoods
- Atewa Forest contributes to Goal 12 by providing the means and resources for sustainable consumption and production

- Atewa Forest contributes to Goal 15 by helping to stop the spread of desertification southward through Ghana. If the forest is designated a National Park, it will contribute even further to this Goal as a protected forest where sustainable use of the ecosystem will be promoted and biodiversity loss will be halted
- Finally, Atewa Forest contributes to Goal 17 because it can promote and support partnerships between public, private and civil society sectors towards a sustainable future for Ghana and provide a showcase for how the Sustainable Development Goals can be implemented effectively in a terrestrial ecosystem that supports green jobs for human development alongside ecological protection and sustainable resource use.

Mr. President, we of the Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape find your silence worrisome and disturbing and the time is now more than opportune for you to break your silence. As Co-Chair of the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Advocates, we want to emphasize here that, economies thrive—without mining natural resources. Japan, South Korea, Italy, Hong Kong, Singapore, Belgium, Switzerland and Taiwan are all among the thriving economies of the world but NONE mines even an ounce of any mineral. Ghana can do same.

Mr. President, very recently you called on CEO's to support you in the attainment of the SDGs. We as people of the Atewa Landscape are here also calling on you to walk the talk by securing Atewa Forest and giving us a long-lasting legacy of wellbeing today and that of posterity. We are aware of the numerous petitions and voices of reason from both local and international actors, including our own school children, all of whom are asking you to walk the talk and act responsibly for today and tomorrow. Mr. President, we entreat you to dedicate Atewa Forest to Ghanaians as a National Park to ensure the continuous provision of water to over 5 million Ghanaians and also to the global community as an important Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and habitat for biodiversity and priceless genetic biological resources.

Currently, Mr. President, we know you are saddled with the unpalatable job of going against a manifesto promise and hence the disturbing silence of the

presidency. Mr. President please do not sacrifice the trust we have reposed in you as President of this country to political expediency which has been the larger failure of many governments.

With this Mr. President, we challenge you to prove the skeptics wrong. Even with 'galamsey', you vouched to put your presidency on the line. It was mining, and no matter the kind of mineral, and the extraction of bauxite also entails mining and the use of water hence the mishandling of riverine bodies, leading to their depletion because with bauxite, the entire forest cover will have to be cleared and with it, all the water bodies in it too will be destroyed.

Up until this bauxite agenda pronouncement there were processes in place to make Atewa a National Park, and this we urge you to make it your sustainable agenda and see to its realization.

Before we conclude Mr. President, we are reliably informed that several international bodies like WWF, A Rocha International, BirdLife International, Rainforest Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Global Wildlife Conservation all with a global membership of over 15 million members and supporters worldwide have extended a call on you to secure Atewa Forest for its water provisioning and biodiversity habitat services. It is our hope that, you will take this in your strides and break your silence and secure Atewa Forests for Prosperity, for Wellbeing and Resilient Communities in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Atewa Forest for Water #SDG6

Atewa for National Park #SDG15

Atewa Till Eternity #SDGs 2030

Thank you

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