

**Coalition of NGOs Against Mining in Atewa Forest
10 Wawa Street. Kokomlemle Accra**

**The Hon. Speaker
Parliament of the 4TH Republic of Ghana
Parliament House
Osu-Accra**

Hon Speaker,

**INVOKING PARLIAMENTS OVERSIGHT ROLE AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE
IN THE PROPOSED MINING OF ATEWA FOREST RESERVE FOR BAUXITE**

National and international environmental organisations have consistently warned the Ghana government of the damage that mining bauxite in the Atewa Forest will have on the communities and wildlife that depend on this ecosystem. The Atewa Forest is one of the world's Key Biodiversity Areas and the source of clean water for about 5 million Ghanaians. It also play a significant socio-cultural role in the lives of communities that reside within the fringes of the forest, key among them is a source of livelihood for hunters and the multi-million bush-meat trade at Anyinam and its environs.

Governments plan to mine the Atewa Forest for bauxite will significantly jeopardize the socio-cultural, environmental and aesthetic functions of the forest. Mining the forest will also destroy the habitats of over 100 globally threatened wildlife species. Bauxite mining clears all vegetation and topsoils, leaving a desert of red mud. Awaso community can testify to the damage it causes and to the lack of development and jobs that come with it. Bauxite mining also has devastating impacts on the health of local communities as the air becomes polluted with toxic red bauxite dust and the clean water is polluted by heavy metals that leach from the soils exposed by the mining. Government communicators have been going around arguing that Government intends to undertake environmentally friendly bauxite mining at Atewa. It should be put on record that there is no such thing as environmentally friendly bauxite mining anywhere in the world.

Despite all these warnings and a recent technical advice from the United States Department of Forest, evidence from within the Atewa Forest suggests that government is still going ahead with its plans to mine bauxite in the forest.

In light of this very recent development, we would like to humbly appeal to Parliament to use your esteem office as the third arm of government to intervene before one of Ghana's most priced asset is decimated. We would like to raise a few key points for your consideration:

1. MINING ATEWA FOREST IN ITS CURRENT STATE VIOLATES EXISTING LAWS OF GHANA

Parliament is surely aware that certain areas of Ghana's environment must be kept strictly off limits from damaging development due to the rare and endangered species they harbour and the critical ecosystem services they provide including, clean water, climate change mitigation and resilience, and livelihood resources for local communities. The Atewa Forest Reserve was duly setup and gazetted based on the Forest Act of 1927 (CAP 157) which sought to create corridors of forest for posterity. Atewa Forest is the most important of these special environments in Ghana, and its critical ecosystems must not be jeopardized. Atewa Forest is also protected by Ghana's own forest laws and regulations that exist to ensure sustainable natural resource management for the benefit of the communities that reside there, as well as for Ghana as a nation, both present and future generations. These laws have been enacted by Parliament and yet, from the recent developments witnessed in the Atewa Forest, it appears they are being side-stepped.

Again, the mandate of the Forestry Commission according to ACT 571 is to ensure the protection and sustainable use of Ghana's forests on behalf of present and future generations of Ghanaians. The Forestry Commission was set up under Ghana's constitution to enforce Ghana's forest laws on the ground, especially in the forest locations, including the Atewa forest which is a protected Forest Reserve. However, as recent reports have shown, Ghana's forests and biodiversity are still disappearing at an alarming rate, evidence that Ghana's forest laws are not being properly enforced. We humbly appeal to Parliament to summon the Forestry Commission to justify (if any) why they are allowing entry into such protected area to be mined which directly breaches the CAP 157 which set up forest reserves.

2. WE IMPLY PARLIAMENT TO EFFECTIVELY PLAY ITS OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITIES THROUGH EFFECTIVE DUE DILIGENCE OF MINING AGREEMENTS

We humbly request Parliament to be highly vigilant in ensuring due diligence with regard to contracting agreements that relate to bauxite development in Ghana. It is now a matter of urgency that Parliament follows the process of due diligence and does not allow any prospecting or mining permits to be issued for bauxite mining in the Atewa Forest thereby ensuring Ghana's forest laws are properly enforced. It is crucial that any bauxite agreements do not contradict Ghana's laws to protect the forests and people.

Again, there is a very worrying lack of transparency regarding Ghana's bauxite agreements. As Parliament is well aware, Ghana now has the Right to Information Law and is also a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Transparency in the agreements and actions pertaining to bauxite development should therefore happen without even the need to request for it. Yet, stakeholders have been excluded from the decision-making process and do not have access to information regarding bauxite development in their forests. They have not been fully informed about the impacts that bauxite mining will have on their livelihoods, access to resources, health and welfare. There should be full transparency regarding these impacts and any concerns raised by communities should be discussed with them. The affected communities currently do not know what the Forestry Commission or the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation or SRK Consulting are doing in the Atewa Forest as stakeholders consultation has not been undertaken. And they have also not seen any permits that are required before these activities – which seem to be exploratory works – actually commence.

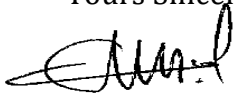
Ghana's Parliament has established strong laws for the protection and sustainable use of Ghana's forests and other natural resources to ensure they continue to provide the resources and services that Ghanaians will depend on for generations to come. Our concern is that these laws are being broken due to inadequate enforcement by government and its institutions. Atewa Forest is a protected Forest yet it is under threat from bauxite development: such an activity in the forest is illegal.

We would humbly request the following from Parliament:

- That Parliament ensures the Atewa Forest is excluded from any bauxite mining agreements so that it continues to provide the resources and life support services that millions of Ghanaians depend on both now and in the future.
- That Parliament ensures proper oversight of the Forestry Commission so that Ghana's forest laws are fully enforced.
- That Parliament ensures full transparency throughout the whole bauxite development project, most especially so that communities can make informed choices regarding any associated development project in their locality.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely



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A Rocha Ghana

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Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape
KASA Initiative Ghana
Eco Care Ghana
Coalition of NGOs against Mining in Atewa Forest
CSO platform for SDG 15
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