

4<sup>th</sup> July, 2019

For Immediate Release

To all Media Agencies

**REJOINDER: ATEWA DISTRICT BAUXITE DEAL OPPOSERS ARE GALEMSEYERS  
- MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

The attention of the Concerned Citizens of the Atewa Landscape and by extension its collaborators, has been drawn to what we call unfortunate statements by Prof. Frimpong Boateng, Minister for Environment, branding us as galemseyers and of double standards. All because, we are calling for judicious use of our fast depleting natural resources, and particularly also asking government not to target Atewa Range Forest for the bauxite development agenda, because of its crucial service of providing water for over 5 million Ghanaians and at the same time, providing other priceless ecosystems services for Ghanaians and the global community as a whole.

The statement by the Minister is not only unfortunate but definitely a travesty of justice and betrayal of the confidence, we have placed in our public officers to secure our natural resources and also particularly because we respect Prof Frimpong Boateng. Nonetheless, we of the Concerned Citizens of the Save Atewa Landscape are not the least worried because that has been the behavior of government functionaries since we committed to stay true to our convictions and resist any attempts to mine in a watershed that is contributing significantly to our water needs as country and helping us build resilience to climate change. Do we have to fight our government and be called names, just because we believe in securing our natural resources for posterity?

We are sure, the general public has seen through the pettiness of the Minister for Environment and no rejoinder would have been necessary. However, we see this also as an opportunity for us to clarify a few points thereby drawing the attention of the Minister of Environment, to the lip service and neglect of their duty to manage our natural resources and protect the citizenry from harmful environmental polluting activities, a task that clearly they have abandoned.

A drowning man would out of desperation clutch at any straw for survival, but eventually would drown. Such actions we assure the Prof. will not distract us to lose

our focus so the earlier he and his cohorts in governance refrain from tagging us the better. We are focused in our avowed policy direction.

Now to set the records straight. The membership of the Concerned Citizens of the Save Atewa Landscape have never indulged in galamsey and will never do such a dastardly act to desecrate the very environment we seek to protect.

Prof. we crave your indulgence to go back to memory lane to the visit of our high powered delegation of the group on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2018, in your office office at the Ministry of Environment where we deliberated on many environmental issues. We were amazed at your resourcefulness and desire to see Atewa forest protected for all its worth a forest reserve, and also more because you grew up within the landscape and recall how aesthetically refreshing and healthy the forest environment created for you as a young and growing child back in the days. We also recall urging you to use your leadership position as the Chair of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on galamsey to ensure that illegal galamsey activities that has moved into the Atewa Forest were curtailed.

Again, we remind the Hon Minister of our Press Conference organized on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2019 at the Press Center in Accra, not so long ago, where we publicly threw more light on illegal activities going in the Atewa Forest and the need for the Forestry Commission and Police as well as the Vanguard to be up and doing. It is clearly ironic and unfortunate for the Hon. Minister to ignore all these warnings we put out, and rather turn around to indicate that we are all galamseyers. This is a clear case of bad faith and double standards on the part of the Hon Minister, and one does not need second guess to agree with us.

We see double standards, when you betray trust of the masses in the protection of the environment the core mandate of the Ministry which you head.

We see double standards and bad faith, particularly on the part of the CEO of the Forestry Commission, who has surprisingly back tracked and denied giving us his full support when we passed through his office on our walk to the Jubilee House to present our petition to government. What you all seem to forget is that walls have ears, and the double standards exhibited is appalling.

Maybe we should also remind the Hon Minister that, the Atewa Forest is gazetted in law as a Forest Reserve and classified under several protection regimes as Hill Sanctuary, Important Bird Area and also a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area (GSBA). The responsibility to manage and secure this forest from all threats that will compromise the integrity of this forest lies first of all, with the state agencies who are mandated by law, working in collaboration with surrounding communities and in partnerships with development partners as indicated in the Forest and Wildlife Policy of 2012. In this regard, any blame, for the failure to prevent or prohibit entry for activities that compromise the ecological integrity of the forest, and is at variance with the purpose and objects for which the forest was gazette should be put at the door step of the state agencies who are given state resources to make sure all our forests stay protected and secured for critical ecosystem services they provide.

Who Hon. Minister is exhibiting double standards, especially when these state agencies refuse to be proactive and only take reactional measures to address clear threats to our natural forest estates. You saw the warnings, and even if you claim you did not, we informed you about them, but you still refused to act appropriately and timely. Before you can accuse us of double standards, we believe you need to seriously examine your ranks and come again. Where has the EPA, Minerals Commission, Forestry Commission been all this while to merit the President putting his presidency on the line to fight galamsey.

Communities and Civil Society Networks and Alliances together with national and international development partners, remain and will stay committed for as long as the state create an enabling environment. It is crucial to also ensure that we pursue inclusive governance of our natural resources and also give communities and development partners the opportunity and tools to contribute to the sustainable management of our natural resource estates. What is important here is that, the state agencies should avoid the common place double standards where, they speak virtue and act differently.

The Minister also talks of responsible mining to preserve flora and fauna just as the President has being emphasizing all along. To these assertions we say “huu” in the Akan parlance.

The bauxite is not in liquid form to use suction pressure to extract. First the vegetation and the topsoil will have to be removed and then the rocks are blasted and crushed to extract the bauxite ore. The entire forest cover has to be wiped away and, in this way,, what would be the fate of the flora and fauna. Forests act as covers for our river sources, so wiping off the forest cover, will lead to the drying up of these rivers and streams. With the habitat of the mammals cleared to a bald landscape where would the animal life be.

We put out a challenge to the government on the 4th of June for them to show us the kind of methods the likes of Prof. and the President say they would employ to extract the bauxite without destroying the forest and all the other services it provides permanently.

Prof. we say NO to mining in the reserved and please avoid the politics of deception that you are treading because it's a very dangerous terrain.

We challenge the Hon. Minister to show proof to buttress his unfortunate claims else he should apologize to all well-meaning Ghanaians who are against plans to convert our most magnificent watershed into a mine pit, and rather help to the preserve, conserve and eventually designate the Atewa Forest Reserve as a National Park.

Thank you.

Signed

Hon. Oteng Adjei (0244518750 / 0264518750)

Hon. Akyeano Tabi 0247-896109

Rev. Collins Amoah 0245-520080

Nana Ampem Darko-Amponsah - 0244245373