



CSO PLATFORM ON SDGs GHANA



**For Immediate Release TO ALL MEDIA AGENCIES**

**Press Statement By: CSO Platform on SDGs Ghana – Sub-Platform SDG 15**

**International Day for Biological Diversity 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2020**

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Today, 22nd May 2020, marks another globally important day for the reflection, appreciation and action towards securing our natural world and the diversity of plants and animals that thrive in it and are crucial for the survival of every person living on this earth.

This year's theme 'Our Solutions are in Nature' is captured to reflect the fact that biodiversity still remains the answer to many of the sustainable development challenges that we all face. From nature-based solutions to climate change, to food and water security and sustainable livelihoods, biodiversity remains the basis for a sustainable future. The recent global assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services by the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reports of mass extinctions that need our urgent action if we are to prevent a repeat of these crises.

The UN declared a decade of biodiversity from 2011 to 2020, which ends soon. Even as the quality of the environment continues to decline, we are called to rally in solidarity behind negotiations to work towards a strong Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This is very urgent, as onset of Covid-19 pandemic demands that we re-examine the way we interact and use the natural world. Without doubt, the evidence points to the fact that, without the natural world, humans will cease to exist.

This important day also provides a crucial opportunity for Ghana to reflect on how we interact with the natural environment and plan for a sustainable future that prioritizes the wellbeing of nature and of every Ghanaian.

Ghana is endowed with rich natural resources and biological diversity from all corners of the country providing critical livelihood solutions to Ghanaians from all walks of life rich and poor. We can mention the many beautiful birds, butterflies, and other animals we see mostly in rural communities in areas set aside for the protection of forests and other biological assets such as the Achimota Forest in Accra, Atewa Forest close to Kyebi, Kakum National Park in the Central Region, Mole National Park in the Savanna Region as well as several sacred groves in the country serving important cultural, spiritual and aesthetic functions. We can also mention the Boabeng Fiema Monkey Sanctuary, Sakumono Ramsar Site, Keta Lagoon and all the forests and wetlands providing important habitats for the protection of specific species and also providing crucial live support services to every Ghanaian.

The beautiful natural areas notwithstanding, we also observe many negative practices from individuals, companies, and state agencies that deplete or destroy or indirectly perpetuate acts that are incompatible with the wellbeing of some of these natural areas so crucial for our survival and sustainable development as a country.



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**Key issues of concern that need urgent attention are as follows:**

1. The increasing incidence of mining in state gazetted forest reserves across the country from galamsey activities as well as state approved mining in areas set aside purposely for the protection of forests and the security of biological diversity. Forest reserves serve as important habitats that support a large diversity of plants and animals. Unfortunately, most forest reserves in Ghana's high forest zone are under threat or pressure from mining activities and this needs to be addressed with all the urgency that the state can mobilize. Current attempts by government to turn critical biological hotspots like Atewa Range Forest Reserve into a bauxite mine is inimical to our commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and derails all efforts locally and globally to secure the wellbeing of our natural environment as a guarantee for our wellbeing.
2. The legal frameworks to support efforts by state and non-state actors in the protection of our natural areas remain limited. The Wildlife Resource Management Bill that empowers communities to participate in and benefit from the management of natural resources in community lands has been in and out of Parliament for more than 16 years now. Another republic is going to end and there is no clear evidence to show the bill will be passed before that time. When finally passed into law, it will also domesticate some key important biodiversity security and regulatory mechanisms such as the protection of migratory species, and entrenched regulations that address the increasing incidence of illegal exploitation and trafficking of endangered species like pangolins, and restricted trade species like rosewood, and many others from Ghana.

All across the country, we see hope, the young ones, and the elderly trying hard to reconnect with nature, travelling to natural areas as much as possible. Domestic tourism to natural areas has surpassed international tourist visits compared to a decade ago. We have experiences where individuals are using their own money to purchase, rescue and set free illegally captured species along our highways. Several communities across the country are struggling to manage wildlife in their communities' lands. These efforts are hampered by the continuous absence of key legislation to enhance enforcement and compliance of the protection of our natural areas and biological diversity, lack of enforcement of the laws that do exist, as well as the wanton destruction of our biological and natural areas that are essential for our wellbeing and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we celebrate and reflect on this important day now and for life after Covid-19, we cannot continue to watch and act with indifference and impunity as our natural world fades away without taking the necessary steps to address the challenges as mentioned above. We need to rededicate and commit to halt the destruction of forest reserves and biological diversity and pursue a development agenda that is founded on nurturing and safeguarding the natural world as an imperative.

**Signed**

**Convenors of SDG 15**

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