

PRESS STATEMENT

To All Media Agencies
With Immediate Effect

GOVERNMENT AND GIADEC MUST STOP THE MISINFORMATION AND LACK OF TRANSPARENCY REGARDING PLANS TO MINE BAUXITE AT ATEWA FOREST, IN THE EASTERN REGION.

Accra, August 19th 2022 - The reckless abandon and persistence of this government to destroy Ghana's progress and efforts to address deforestation and build resilience for communities is appalling to say the least.

We say this today because, according to the Minerals Commission's Mining Repository, the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC) has been granted a licence dated 27 July 2022 to prospect for bauxite in the Atewa Range Forest Reserve. Technically, this will be the second needless prospecting in a magnificent and critical forest like the Atewa Forest Reserve.

GIADEC and the Ghana government have ensured the utmost secrecy throughout this process. This is in complete disregard for Ghana's Minerals and Mining Act 703 that requires transparency in the granting of mineral rights.

We believe they have done this to push through their agenda with the minimum of resistance from local communities, civil society, and all Ghanaians concerned about the Atewa Forest and Ghana's future generations.

Certain information provided by GIADEC and government also appears misleading. This is again no doubt to minimise resistance and advocacy statements that may disturb potential partners and investors in government's bauxite mining plans for Atewa.

Our checks have determined that:

- 1) The Minister did not notify the relevant District Assemblies about the application for the mineral rights with licence code PL.5/55 and did not publish notice of the application in a locally acceptable way nor exhibit it at the relevant District Assembly offices.
- 2) The CEO of the Minerals Commission in a statement on 17 August 2022 claimed that the current Minister for Lands and Natural Resources has not granted a single prospecting licence to any company to undertake exploration activities in Forest Reserves, when in actual fact GIADEC was granted a prospecting licence within the same period of 23 April 2021 and 17 August 2022.
- 3) The Minerals Commission and the Forestry Commission did not include this pending application on the list of pending applications they jointly published on 14 May 2021 following the Minister's directive banning prospecting licences and activities in forest reserves.
- 4) Government has led Ghanaians to believe its plans are to mine only a 1.9% of the Atewa Range Forest. Meanwhile the prospecting licence on the Mineral's Commission website covers virtually all of the northern half of the Atewa Range Forest Reserve.

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The evidence

1. The Minerals and Mining Act 703 requires the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources to write to the Chief or allodial holder and the relevant district assemblies to notify them of a pending minerals rights application. This notice must be given at least 45 days before the Minister makes the decision on the application. It should also be published in a way that is acceptable to local communities and exhibited at the District Assembly offices. Our checks with the Assemblies of Koforidua District and Atiwa District show they have not received any such notice. This is a very critical part of transparency in the process of granting mineral rights.

2. You will recall that the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, in a directive published by his Ministry on 23 April 2021, suspended all reconnaissance and/or prospecting activities in Forest Reserves and *“directed the Minerals Commission, with immediate effect, not to accept, process and/or recommend the grant, including renewal and/or extension, of reconnaissance and prospecting licenses in Forest Reserves”*. The application for the prospecting license in the Atewa Range Forest Reserve was made on 11 February 2021. It is not possible that this license was granted between 11 February and 5 March 2021 when Hon. Jinapor assumed office as the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources. If the statement by the CEO of the Minerals Commission is correct that Hon. Jinapor has not granted any license for prospecting in Forest Reserves since assuming office, how has this been granted?

3. On 14 May 2021, the Minerals Commission and Forestry Commission jointly published a Public Notice stating that the Minister had directed them to publish a list of applications granted or pending for reconnaissance or prospecting licenses in Forest Reserves. Their duly published list included 12 prospecting and/or reconnaissance licenses still active in Forest Reserves, and a further 68 that were pending. There was NO pending application listed for the Atewa Range Forest Reserve by GIADEC or any other company. However, according to the information published on the Minerals Commission website for license PL.5/55, GIADEC’s application for a prospecting license in the Atewa Forest was made on 11 February 2021, meaning it was indeed pending at the time the list was published. This makes it appear like the government did not want this information made public so as to avoid any resistance. The Minister’s claims of the “highest standards of transparency” as reason for publishing this list appear completely empty.

4. In comments to the media published 20 September 2020 in response to the civil society legal action against the government’s plans to mine Atewa Forest, the Attorney General claimed that the government would mine a portion of the Atewa Forest and therefore licensed an area constituting 1.95% of the Atewa Forest for mining. As the Minerals Commission Mining Repository information for license PL.5/55 now demonstrates very clearly, the licensed area is far larger than 1.95%. Instead, it covers about 50% of the Atewa Range Forest Reserve north of Kibi. This is a departure from the Attorney General’s promise to Ghanaians. A case of broken promises.

We see these developments to be extremely serious breaches of Ghanaian’s trust and in some cases breaches of administrative procedures, guidelines and laws regarding mining in protected forest reserves by the Government of Ghana itself.

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During a meeting with Regional Ministers and relevant sector Ministers on 28 April 2021, the President himself reiterated the importance of protecting the forest reserves from mining by designating Forest Reserves and waterbodies as “RED ZONES” and directed strict enforcement of the Minister’s April 2021 directive. Atewa Forest is not only a Protected Forest Reserve but also a water tower. By the President’s own words, Atewa Forest is a RED ZONE that must be protected from mining. The ban on granting reconnaissance and prospecting licenses and all reconnaissance/prospecting activities in Forest Reserves is still in place.

We reiterate that, regardless of how small the area planned for bauxite mining, Atewa must not be mined for bauxite. The government and GIADEC must rescind their plans immediately. Ghana can have a thriving integrated aluminium industry without targeting Atewa Forest, in order to save crucial water sources for over 5 million Ghanaians. Failure to heed to this call, will be intergenerationally suicidal and reckless.

The lack of transparency and the misinformation throughout this process is unacceptable. Ghana’s resources including her forests are for all Ghanaians. If government is trying to keep communities and civil society quiet, it will not work.

The Okyenhene has made a clarion call for Ghana to pursue a pathway of making Atewa Forest a National Park to pave way for several compatible green developments, and we fully support this and will rally behind that goal. We will therefore never give up defending the Atewa Forest from a development that is both unnecessary and unlawful and we ask all well-meaning Ghanaians to add their voices to secure Atewa Forest for today and tomorrow.

Signed

A Rocha Ghana

Eco Conscious Citizens

Ghana Youth Environment Movement (GYEM)

Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape (CCAL)

EcoCare Ghana

KASA Initiative

Boakye Twumasi-Ankra

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The President

Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape

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Attachments

URL: https://miningrepository.mincom.gov.gh/license/246416

Minerals Commission, Government of Ghana

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Licence code	PL.5/55	Application code	APL-P-214
Status	Active License	Licence Type	Restricted Prospecting License
Owner/Company /Entity	Ghana Integrated aluminium Development Corporation	TIN	

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Owner/Company /Entity	Ghana Integrated aluminium Development Corporation	TIN	
Start Date	28-07-2022	Application Date	11-02-2021
Expiry Date	27-07-2025	Base	459.33 Cadastre Unit(s)
Transfer Date		Renewal Date	
District	Atiwa	Region	Eastern Region Koforidua District Atiwa District
Mineral/Services Provided	Bauxite		

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License PL.5/55
Minerals Commission, Government of Ghana

GeoServer

A1:	N 6, 10, 15 W 0, 36, 0
A2:	N 6, 13, 0 W 0, 36, 0
A3:	N 6, 13, 0 W 0, 36, 15
A4:	N 6, 16, 0 W 0, 36, 15
A5:	N 6, 16, 0 W 0, 34, 0
A6:	N 6, 18, 45 W 0, 34, 0
A7:	N 6, 18, 45 W 0, 32, 15

Total (GHS): 1,000
Total (USD): 15,999

Date Paid	Type	Receipt	Currency	Amount
11-05-2021	PL Annual Mineral Rights Fee	N/A	USD	14,698.56
11-05-2021	Large Scale Application Fee (Foreign)	N/A	USD	750
11-05-2021	Gazette Fee > 25 Acres	N/A	GHS	1,000
11-05-2021	Large Scale Application Fee (Ghanaian)	N/A	USD	550
				Total (GHS): 1,000
				Total (USD): 15,999