



PRESS STATEMENT

**For Immediate Release
To All Media Agencies**

Atewa Forest is a ‘NO GO AREA’ for Mining. GIADEC and Strategic Partner Must Walk Away Immediately

Accra, August 2022 – The Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC) gave notice, Friday 5 August that announcement of its strategic partner for Project 3 is imminent. Project 3 includes the planned bauxite mine in the contested Atewa Forest. GIADEC stated it has finalised negotiations with its ‘preferred strategic partner’ and is going through necessary approval processes.

A Rocha Ghana is urgently reminding all investors and mining companies – especially GIADEC’s ‘preferred strategic partner’ – that Atewa Forest is a **no-go area** for bauxite mining. Any investor or company planning to partner GIADEC in this endeavour will face immediate sustained local and international resistance. This will not stop until these destructive plans for Atewa Forest are dropped.

Atewa’s no-go area status for mining has already been made abundantly clear. As a reminder, it includes government’s April 2021 ban on prospect licensing and activities in all Ghana’s Forest Reserves, and Ghana’s mining guidelines that exclude sites like Atewa from mining. Further, Atewa’s 2021 status as an Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) site triggers the International Finance Corporation’s Performance Standard 6 (IFC-PS6) confirming Atewa as a no-go area for mining. And the ECOWAS Mining Directive states that lands with ‘peculiar risks to the preservation of security including areas which have environmental, social and cultural sensitivity to mining operations’ – a category into which Atewa clearly falls – must be made no-go zones for mining.

A Rocha Ghana also reminds government and GIADEC that only one year ago the Okyenhene gave voice to his desire that the Atewa Forest should be made a National Park. The wish of the King of the Atewa Forest is that it should be protected in perpetuity for the benefits his communities derive from the forest. His wishes must be respected.

GIADEC and its partner should also be reminded that key multinational aluminium-user companies BMW, Tetra-Pak and Schüco International have expressed deep concerns about government's plans, saying bauxite from the Atewa Forest would present an unacceptable risk for their companies. They went so far as to say they would not accept aluminium derived from Atewa's bauxite in their supply chains, with one adding if the mining did not meet certain forest and climate change standards. These companies no doubt speak for many. Their rejection would present a huge marketing challenge to GIADEC and its strategic partner.

Resistance is also coming from local communities, civil society, professional institutions, state agencies, international development agencies, private companies, and individuals both in Ghana and abroad for a multitude of reasons. We again share some of these points as a reminder.

Around 5 million people benefit from Atewa's clean water every day. Water contamination from bauxite mining is extremely dangerous and people are advised not even to touch it, let alone drink it. Where will the 5 million people, especially the forest communities, get their clean water from when it is contaminated by bauxite mining?

Atewa Forest also protects key habitats and species, including the critically endangered frog species discovered by CSIR and proudly announced in government's 2022 budget statement. Paradoxically, the bauxite mining will destroy the very site and species that government in 2021 was so proud of.

At a time when governments across the world including Ghana's are ramping up actions to address biodiversity loss and climate change, mining Atewa will do the exact opposite and put one of Ghana's most spectacular sites for wildlife at risk. Atewa has been classified by the Wallace Initiative as being in the top 2% of all the world's protected areas for biodiversity resilience to climate change and, consequently, for maintenance of ecosystem services. This quality will be lost if government's mining plans go ahead.

We again urge the government and GIADEC to exclude bauxite in the Atewa Forest as part of Ghana Integrated Aluminium Industry, because Ghana's integrated aluminium industry can thrive without targeting the bauxite at Atewa Forest. Ghana has both a ban on mining in Forest Reserves and mining guidelines that exclude Atewa from these developments. Mining a forest that protects critical water sources, biodiversity, and other ecosystem services would be both myopic and dangerous for Ghana, especially for Atewa's communities and future Ghanaians.

We take this opportunity to serve notice to GIADEC and its preferred strategic partner that, in view of the infringement of the development on our right to a healthy environment, water and climate resilience, both for downstream and upstream communities, we will take all necessary legitimate steps available to us as citizens within and without the borders of Ghana to resist any plans to destroy Atewa Forest and the invaluable services it provides to Ghanaians.

Signed

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