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December 15, 2017

His Excellency President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo  
The President of the Republic of Ghana  
c/o The Chief of Staff  
Office of the President  
Flagstaff House  
Accra

Your Excellency,

Re: Protecting globally threatened species in Atewa Forest

We are writing in our capacity as the Chair of the Species Survival Commission Primate Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and President of the African Primatological Society, to bring to your attention the recent discovery of the globally threatened primate White-naped Mangabey (*Cercocebus lunulatus*) in the Atewa Forest in Ghana. The discovery was made by A Rocha scientists undertaking a survey of the mammals in the forest using motion triggered cameras, and I can confirm that their pictures clearly depict this species.

The Primate Specialist Group recently (May 2016) re-assessed the extinction risk to the White-naped Mangabey and elevated the species to Critically Endangered, thus placing it into the highest category of threat on the IUCN's internationally recognized Red List of Threatened Species. This rare primate is restricted to a handful of forests in southwest Ghana and southeast Cote d'Ivoire, with Ghana containing the majority of its range. It has now become so rare that it is the subject of intensive captive breeding programs at Accra and Kumasi zoos, supported by London and Heidelberg Zoos.

The discovery of White-naped Mangabey in Atewa Forest is of enormous importance for the future of the species, and makes it a matter of some urgency that the forest is properly protected both from hunting and from habitat change. Atewa Forest is important for many species of global conservation concern including 8 amphibian species, 8 other mammals and 11 birds that are at some threat of extinction. One of the amphibians – the Togo Slippy Frog (*Conraua derooi*) – is also Critically Endangered. When these are considered together with the recent demonstration of the forest's enormous importance to the water supply of millions of people in Accra\*, the argument for protecting the forest becomes very compelling.

I am aware that Atewa Forest has been included by the Government of Ghana in plans for an integrated bauxite industry because of deposits in the hill tops. Since the extraction of bauxite will require the forest to be removed, this would certainly lead to the loss of this rare primate. I urge then that Ghana's commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to the Sustainable Development Goals take precedence in this case and that Atewa Forest is removed from mining plans once and for all and made into a National Park.

Yours faithfully,

Russell A. Mittermeier, Ph.D.  
Chair, IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group

Inza Koné, Ph.D.  
President, African Primatological Society

\*Schep *et al.*, 2016, *The Economics of the Atewa Range Forerst, Ghana* <http://bit.ly/2mAKGgs>