



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
Jubilee House
Accra

6th July 2018

Your Excellency,

Re: Threat and opportunity regarding the Atewa Forest Key Biodiversity Area

We are writing as a group of global nature conservation organisations with the combined number of more than 15 million members and supporters worldwide, to express our concern at the current threat to Atewa Forest at Kyebi from bauxite mining. Atewa Forest is recognised as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), thus holds high importance for the global persistence of biodiversity, and harbours rare and threatened species found in few other places in the world.

However, it is not just the biological importance of Atewa Forest that concerns us - up to five million people are dependent on the water provisioning services of Atewa's forests.

Bauxite mining in Atewa Forest would greatly endanger the large number of species in the forest that are already globally threatened with extinction. These include over 100 species of birds, mammals, amphibians and plants. A number of species are confined entirely to Atewa Forest, being found nowhere else in the world. And at least two species are classified by the IUCN with their highest level of extinction threat (Critically Endangered): the Togo Slippery Frog *Conraua derooi* and the plant *Aubreginia taiensis*. Three more species are expected to be classified as Critically Endangered once assessed: the White-naped Mangabey *Cercocebus*

lunulatus, the Afia Birago Puddle Frog *Phrynobatrachus afiibirago* and the plant *Monanthonaxis atewensis*. Although Atewa Forest has been subjected to unmanaged logging over the years, with high hunting pressure, these high biological values remain and Atewa Forest is amongst the most important sites within Ghana that remain unprotected.

We are convinced that a future for Atewa Forest that includes its total protection and the promotion of a green economy in the surrounding landscape is more sustainable than any which involve mining. In fact, a recent economic analysis indicated that over 25 years, establishing a National Park at Atewa along with a well-managed buffer zone returned higher economic values to the Ghana economy than the mining scenario. We also note the existence of large bauxite deposits elsewhere in Ghana which might be exploited instead of those at Atewa.

We are aware of a suggestion to protect the river sources in the southern half of Atewa whilst mining the north. This fails to acknowledge that the Birim River flows from the south all the way around the perimeter of the north, so will be just as vulnerable to mining there. We are also concerned that bauxite mining in the north will only lead to greater pressure on the south, and hinder the effective development of any protected area given the proximity of such a mine. It should also be noted that the key biological values of Atewa Forest are concentrated in the northern half.

Ghana – along with all other members of the United Nations - is committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), something for which you yourself have been an outstanding champion. Goal 15 of the SDGs is measured by an indicator of KBA coverage by Protected Areas. Therefore we believe there is a major opportunity for Ghana to effectively demonstrate its commitment to the SDGs by making Atewa a protected area, and thus making significant progress on a key SDG indicator. The establishment of a new National Park will be widely celebrated whereas we fear that the loss of such an important forest as Atewa will be widely condemned.

We therefore urge you to remove all reference to Kyebi from the text of the Ghana Integrated Bauxite and Aluminium Development Authority Bill, to reject any proposals to divide the forest, and instead to declare the entire Atewa Forest a new National Park for Ghana. We are ready and willing to provide any support that may be useful and appropriate in this endeavour.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Naylor

Executive Director

A Rocha International



Dr. Helen Meredith
Executive Director
Amphibian Survival Alliance



Patricia Zurita
Chief Executive Officer
BirdLife International



Dr. Wes Sechrest
Chief Executive Officer
Global Wildlife Conservation



Dr. Paul Salaman
Chief Executive Officer
Rainforest Trust



Dr. Mike Clarke
Chief Executive
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



Frederick Kumah
Director, Africa
WWF Regional Office for Africa (ROA)
WWF International

CC:
The Vice President
The Senior Minister
The Minister of Finance
The Chairman of Council of State
The Minister of Mines and Energy
The Minister of Lands and Natural Resources
The Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation
The Speaker of Parliament
The Clerk, Parliamentary Select Committee of Mines and Energy
The Clerk, Parliamentary Select Committee of Lands and Natural Resources
The Clerk, Parliamentary Select Committee of Environment Science and Technology

ADDENDUM

About Key Biodiversity Areas

KBAs are sites that make significant contributions to the global persistence of biodiversity. As such, these are considered to be the most important sites on the planet for the conservation of nature.

The criteria which are used to identify KBAs were developed through extensive consultations with the conservation community as well as the business and financing community over a 4-5

year period. IUCN published the criteria in 2016 and at the same time a partnership of 12 leading conservation organisations was established to identify, map and conserve these sites.

Key Biodiversity Areas and the criteria used to identify them are integral to a number of multi-lateral agreements and global finance processes of importance to Ghana.

- The **UN Sustainable Development Goal 15** (Life on Land) uses the percentage of Key Biodiversity Areas that are protected as an indicator of progress
- The **Convention on Biodiversity's** Aichi Target 11 on Protected Area networks uses KBA coverage as a key indicator.
- Within the **World Bank's** Environmental and Social Framework, the definition of "Critical Habitat", which sets the bar for the most stringent lending safeguards, draws directly from a subset of the criteria for the identification of KBAs.
- The **International Finance Corporation's** Performance Standard 6 definition of "critical habitat" also draws heavily on earlier KBA criteria.

This all serve to demonstrate the critically high level of biological importance of Atewa Forest, as a KBA. It also clearly demonstrates the progress towards the SDGs and the CBD that Ghana could achieve should Atewa Forest be fully protected.

About the Economics of the Atewa

The report 'Economics of the Atewa Forest Range, Ghana' ([Schep et al 2016](#)) found that the provisioning of ecosystem services by the Atewa Forest and its surrounding landscape is critical for millions of people and worth many millions financially. Up to five million people in Eastern, Central and Greater Accra regions of Ghana are dependent on the water provisioning services of Atewa Forest. Of various development scenarios, it was found that effective protection of the forest yields the greatest economic value - US\$1,157 million, over a 30-year period - to local communities, downstream residents and the national treasury compared to scenarios that include mining. The services and values that Atewa Forest provides include estimated current annual values for water of US\$28.1m, non-timber products of US\$12.4m, climate amelioration services c. 55,000 tonnes of CO2 per year, tourism services over US\$5m, cocoa farming at US\$9.3m, and timber at US\$40.6m.