

## "Preserve Atewa Forest For National Park; Not Bauxite Mining"



**Government's decision to carry out large scale bauxite mining in the ancient Atewa Forest Reserve in the Eastern Region of Ghana continues to face resistance from majority of Ghanaians and other environmentally friendly local and international organisations.**

A Rocha Ghana, an NGO leading the crusade has reaffirmed its utmost disapproval at the Government's unpopular decision and is calling for the Atewa forest reserve to be exempted from the bauxite mining plan.

The National Director of A Rocha Ghana, Dr. Seth Appiah-Kubi is demanding the Government and its Chinese counterpart Sinohydro to rather turn the Atewa forest into a National Park and a thriving tourism centre to improve its protection and sustainability.

Speaking at a Press Conference jointly organized by A Rocha Ghana and World Evangelical Alliance Sustainability Centre at Kempinski Hotel in Accra, Dr. Appiah-Kubi bemoaned the attempt by the government to expose the Atewa forest which has local and international significance to total destruction by the Chinese company.

"Atewa forest provides water to over five million Ghanaians. It is the headwater for three key rivers in Ghana namely; the Densu river which flows into the Weija Dam that supplies water to millions of inhabitants in Western part of Accra, the Ayensu river which flows all the way to Sweduro and Wineba in Central Region and the Birim river which also supplies water to the Pra river for the Akyim people and flows to the Western Region where it enters the sea".

He emphasized that the Atewa forest because of its unique nature, is a habitat to very important plants and animal species to the extent that some flora and fauna species can only be found in Atewa.

The Director of A Rocha Ghana thus urged the Ghanaian government to ponder deeply on the long term effect the bauxite mining in the Atewa forest would bring to the people, communities and the nation at large and rescind its decision.

Meanwhile, Concerned Citizens of Atewa and leadership of the Atewa communities recently demonstrated their total disapproval and demanded the government to rescind its decision to mine the forest. The people embarked on a 6 day-95km Atewa Water Walk carrying water from its origin in the forest to the seat of government (Jubilee House) in Accra and presented a petition to the President Nana Akufo-Addo describing the Atewa forest as their source of life and sustenance.

Dr. Seth Appiah-Kubi who sides with the people's action also supports their outright rejection of the bauxite development in the Atewa since the promised jobs and development will not adequately compensate for their losses.

**He urged the Government to pay particular attention to the people's demand for alternative development interventions** such as ecotourism, research and education, forest-related green development investments such as establishing the cocoa processing value chain that private sector companies have already expressed interest in pursuing there, and adding value to local produce, supported by traditional alternative livelihoods

such as beekeeping, organic fruit and vegetable production, and sale of traditional artefacts to tourists.

A Rocha Ghana Boss passionately appealed to the Government to exempt Atewa from its bauxite development plan and look at other bauxite-rich sites elsewhere. He said Ghana would fail in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6 and others if Atewa is destroyed.

The Director of World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) Sustainability Centre, Matthias Boehning said turning the Atewa forest into a big scale bauxite mining site would pose a serious threat to the lives of the people and the environment.

He charged all faith-based organisations and believers in Ghana and other countries to speak out against the destruction of Atewa forest reserve.

Source: Edmond Gyebi

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