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BMW Group, Tetra Pak and Schüco International Express Concerns About Sourcing Aluminium from Ghana's Irreplaceable Atewa Forest

**As Ghana Weighs Economic Benefits of Mining Bauxite for Aluminium, Multi-Billion-Dollar
Global Companies Respond to the Community Groups Calling for Protection of Critical Forest**



Atewa Forest edge residents carry water. (Photo by Jeremy Lindsay, A Rocha)

Three global manufacturing companies—BMW Group, Tetra Pak and Schüco International—have signalled concern over the use of bauxite sourced from Ghana's Atewa Forest for aluminium if mining has catastrophic and irreversible effects on the people and wildlife that depend on the forest. More than 5 million Ghanaians depend on Atewa Forest as their source of clean drinking water.

'Saving Atewa Forest from mining should be an intergenerational priority, and we are happy and grateful that big businesses in the aluminium value chain understand the importance of a healthy forest and the environmental services it provides,' said Mr. Oteng Adjei, president of the Concerned Citizens of Atewa Landscape (CCAL), the grass-roots movement advocating against bauxite mining in Atewa Forest and the recipient of letters from all three companies.

'We appreciate their commitment to supporting local and international efforts to secure Atewa Forest against bauxite mining that is certain to destroy the forest, its water services and biodiversity.'

BMW Group, Tetra Pak and Schüco International are all members of the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI), established to certify the production and supply of aluminium including bauxite extraction. The letters from the companies state:

Schüco: 'Schüco would oblige our aluminium suppliers not to supply aluminium derived from bauxite mined in the Atewa Range Forest Reserve, and we intend to encourage other aluminium users to join us in this commitment.'

Tetra Pak: 'Sourcing aluminium produced from bauxite mined in the Atewa Range Forest Reserve... presents a level of risk that is completely unacceptable to Tetra Pak. No matter how high the environmental standards that are applied, any form of mining at this site will have an unavoidable destructive impact on the values inherent in such a natural habitat.'

BMW Group: 'Bauxite from the region of the Atewa Forest needs to be in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UNFCCC Paris Agreement on Climate Change and Ghana's voluntary national contributions towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. If this is not the case the BMW Group will not accept aluminium in its supply chains that originates bauxite from the Atewa Forest.'

Campaigners to protect Atewa Forest have repeatedly insisted that purchasing bauxite mined from in the Atewa Forest would not meet ASI's standards and that bauxite mining in Atewa would threaten species with global extinction, undermining the Convention on Biodiversity and the Sustainable Development Goals, both of which set clear targets to stop extinctions.

While the companies recognize the government of Ghana's desire to develop the aluminium sector for economic development and poverty reduction, their letters make clear their commitments to sustainability. All three companies want their suppliers and sub-suppliers to meet their same social and environmental standards.

If bauxite from Atewa becomes part of Ghana's aluminium supply, the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC) risks outright rejection of all Ghana's bauxite and aluminium by aluminium users such as these.

In late 2016, the Ghanaian government initiated plans to mine bauxite found beneath Atewa Forest as part of a financial deal with China. Extracting bauxite in Atewa would require 'strip mining' where the whole surface layer of soil is removed. This means a total loss of the forest in the mined areas, along with all the biodiversity it contains. In 2019, bulldozers started to clear trees and create access roads in Atewa Forest, even after a number of international groups, led by A Rocha, and local groups, now led by CCAL, had spent years urging the government to protect Atewa Forest in perpetuity by converting it into a national park.

Unlike Ghana's existing bauxite mine at Awaso, which locals describe as a 'desert of red mud', Atewa Forest is teeming with life, home to at least 50 mammal species, more than 1,000 species of plants, at least 230 species of birds and more than 570 butterflies—including species found nowhere else in the world. Atewa is a Key Biodiversity Area, a site of global importance to the persistence of biodiversity and to the planet's overall health. In a recent book, acclaimed biologist and author Professor E.O. Wilson lists Atewa Forest as one of the 38 most important places on Earth that should be set aside for nature's benefit.

'Atewa's incredible biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides are priceless, and the local communities have been very vocal in their wish to protect this place from destruction,' said Daryl Bosu of A Rocha Ghana. 'By trying to extract short-term monetary gain from the forest, the government is actually driving companies away from doing business with Ghana. It

is time to invest in Atewa's long-term protection, not only for the benefit of Ghanaians, but to the benefit of all life on Earth, which depends on our forests to help fight the climate crisis and prevent pandemics.'

In 2016, A Rocha and partners published a report that showed that protecting Atewa Forest as a national park and a buffer area around it—rather than mining it for bauxite—actually had the highest economic value for the country over 25 years, with tremendous benefits to communities both upstream and down.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) passed a resolution in November of 2020 demanding global action to save Atewa from bauxite mining, joining the international call to protect this irreplaceable forest. In addition to providing clean water to the communities around it, Atewa Forest is home to the endangered white-naped mangabey; the critically endangered Togo slippery frog, and the critically endangered Afia Birago puddle frog, which was discovered in 2017.

Simon Stuart, Executive Director of A Rocha International said, 'There are so many ways in which protecting Atewa Forest would be a better outcome than exploiting it for bauxite. We are glad to see these companies taking this lead by expressing their concerns at a time when we so desperately need a broad consensus to make these better choices for the natural world.'

This press release comes from a group of global nature conservation organisations with the combined number of more than 15 million members and supporters worldwide.

