



NATIONAL  
FORESTRY  
FORUM-GHANA

26<sup>th</sup> July 2016.

**His Excellency,  
The President of the Republic of Ghana  
Flag Staff House  
Accra.**

Your Excellency,

**PETITION TO HALT MINING IN TANO OFFIN FOREST RESERVE.**

We, Civil Society Organisations, listed below, working in the Natural Resource and Environment Sector, wish to seek your intervention to halt mining in the Tano Offin Forest Reserve in the Atwima Mponua District of the Ashanti Region.

Your Excellency, our reasons for our appeal for your intervention in this matter are as follows;

Ghana, has since 1992, signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and as further commitment to this convention designated portions of 30 Forest Reserves with extraordinary biological importance as Globally Significant Biodiversity Areas (GSBAs). Among these GSBA's is the Tano Offin Forest Reserve, which is the fourth largest in Ghana. More than 90% of the GSBA in the Tano Offin Forest Reserve is to be subjected to mining. An entry permit to the Forest Reserve, has been granted to Exxon Cubic Group by the Forestry Commission, dated 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016. By mining this GSBA, Ghana will not be demonstrating her commitments under this very important Convention. This would also be violating the Article 40 of the 1992 Constitution which stipulates compliance with international law and treaty obligations such as the CBD.

Also several investments have been made by donors and our institutions to constitute these GSBAs, particularly Tano Offin Forest Reserve. We are informed a company has adopted this forest reserve to further improve the ecology of this reserve. We therefore find it very worrying that despite these huge investments, this reserve is being opened up to mining. The biodiversity and environmental losses from this area far outweighs any financial benefit that we hope to gain from reducing this hill sanctuary into a pile of irrecoverable rubble.

Furthermore, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) manifesto 2012, recognizing the importance of forests and biodiversity to the heritage of Ghana and the threats they face, committed to **"Promulgation of legislation to prevent mining activities in protected areas"** such as Tano Offin Forest Reserve. Allowing Exton Cube Group to mine in this forest reserve would be construed as the NDC government's failure to keep faith with its promise to the people of Ghana. It would also raise credibility issues on the NDC government's commitment to our environment security.

Additionally, Your Excellency, technocrats in the Forestry Commission and the Minerals Commission have raised very strong objections specifically against mining in Tano Offin Forest Reserve. In spite of these objections, a mining permit has been issued to Exton Cube Group; something we find very questionable. The grant of this permit, despite very reasonable objections does not promote the 'strong institutions' that Ghana and Africa badly need.

A research by International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO, 2011) indicates that Togo, Nigeria and Ghana have the highest rate of deforestation in the world. Ghana has a deforestation rate of 2.19 percent and a deforestation rate above one percent is alarming. Mining in Tano Offin Forest Reserve will aggravate the already alarming rate of forest degradation in the country and wreak havoc on freshwater systems and watersheds, which are already globally scarce commodities, as well as the entire ecosystem and biodiversity

The Forestry Commission, furthermore in its report titled, "Mining in Forest Reserves, Concern of the Forestry Commission" (2002) has stated that;

*"Although Off-reserve mining has gone on in Ghana for some time, we are yet to see a demonstration from industry any best practice rehabilitation suitable to tropical forests. The Commission is thus hesitant about destroying more areas with the hope of rehabilitating them. We believe we should get the rehabilitation methods right in off-reserve forests before venturing into Forest Reserves".*

Finally, our checks on the ground indicate that roads have been reopened in the Tano Offin Forest Reserve and the forest reserve is being cleared for the purpose of mining. It is also for this reason that we think this matter is exigent, before any major losses happen or before illegal loggers have easier access to this forest. It is still very good time to halt this operation once and for all.

We respectfully hold, that mining in Tano Offin Forest Reserve is misplaced and needs your immediate intervention.

We therefore call for the following;

- That the permit to Exton Cube Group, to prospect for Bauxite in Tano Offin Forest reserve be revoked.
- That the government demonstrates greater commitment to prohibit mining in protected areas as stated in the 2012 NDC Campaign Manifesto.
- An investigation into the circumstances for the issuance of the permit for Mining in the Tano Offin Forest Reserve.

It is our firm belief that as a celebrated member of the international community, as epitomised in your distinguished role in the Sustainable Development Goals, both at the international and the national levels, and as the Father of the Nation and protector of our heritage, your high office will positively respond to this petition and take measures to protect the Tano Offin Forest Reserve and immediately halt the mining operation.

Yours Sincerely,

Samuel Mawutor  
Coordinator  
Forest Watch Ghana

On behalf of the CSO Coalitions against mining in Tano Offin Forest Reserve