

# URGENT ACTION



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## Open-pit Gold Mine in the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve

Ghana 24.03.2009

*Newmont Ghana Gold Limited (NGGL) plans to construct an open-pit gold mine in the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve located at New Abirem in the Birim North District of Ghana's Eastern Region and has recently been granted the environmental permit to commence operations.*

*The Akyem mine would result in the relocation of over 1,500 people. Farming, the main source of livelihood of communities in the area, will be very severely affected. The failure to protect these communities' right to feed themselves violates international human rights law.*

### CALL TO ACTION

**It is urgent to send a letter to the President of the Republic of Ghana, asking him to reject plans of Newmont Ghana Gold Limited to construct the open-pit gold mine in the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve located at New Abirem in order to guarantee the Right to Food for the people living in this area. Please send copies of this letter to the President of Ghana and to FIAN Ghana.**

### BACKGROUND

The 2002 Forestry Commission Report entitled "Mining in Forest Reserves: Concern of the Forestry Commission", acknowledges that Forest Reserves in Ghana are among the world's last remaining, but fast-declining. Tropical forests and Ghana's forest reserves are a rich stock of genetic resources. According to the report, for the majority of rural dwellers, forests constitute a priceless ecological resource which protects land and water, controlling floods, warding off wind erosion, recycling carbon, promoting rainfall and providing habitat for flora and fauna. Currently, Ghana's forest cover is being depleted at the rate of 65,000 hectares per year. To this end, allowing mining in the country's forest reserves will only accentuate this alarming decline.

The Akyem mine would result in the relocation of over 1,500 people, most them small-holder farmers. There are clear international standards for consultation, compensation and resettlement in cases of evictions. The Constitution of Ghana and other legislative texts (especially the Minerals and Mining Law) also entail provisions and norms to protect and guarantee human rights in cases of evictions. However, experiences in the past have showed that such standards are not always followed and that the responsible governmental authorities have often failed to monitor and impose the proper implementation of these standards. In particular, the Concerned Farmers Association whose members come from the affected communities in the area seriously question the ability of the Crop Compensation Committee set up to negotiate on behalf of the farmers. In addition, the removal of forest habitats to make way for the Akyem mining project will adversely affect 83 bird species that are listed by IUCN as having special status because of their rarity and the risk of extinction (Public Agenda, 16.10.06). A biological survey also notes the presence of several plant species, a tree frog, a flying squirrel and several butterfly species of conservation concern and nine species of katydid that are new to science, of which four are found only in the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve.

The operation of mine waste storage facilities in the area could also lead to the contamination of streams and rivers in the area with cyanide and heavy metals. A number of water bodies take their sources from the forests reserve and this is important for sustainable water supply. The forest reserve also regulates micro climate in the area making it suitable for farming activities and sustainable livelihoods. The open-pit of the Akyem mine will destroy a quarter of the forest remaining in the Reserve and the invaluable benefits to the communities in the area.

As per the Revised Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) submitted by Newmont, construction and operation of the proposed mine and ancillary facilities would directly affect 1,915 hectares through removal of vegetation, soil and subsoil.

The project will have significant implications for food security, poverty reduction and conservation efforts in the area. Opening up forest reserves to mining companies will not only jeopardize food security and conservation efforts on the local and national level, but also undermine international efforts to realise the human right to food for all and to eliminate poverty, as well as to protect natural habitats. As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Ghana has committed to respect and protect - among other rights - the human right to food, water, housing and health all of its citizens, including the families who would be affected by mining. The protection of the forest reserve is essential for the farmers, for their livelihood and subsistence

**ADDRESSES**

His Excellency President John Evans Atta Mills  
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**END OF ACTION**

**30 of May, 2009**



Please inform **FIAN International** about any response you receive to your faxes and letters.

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Ghana

**Re:Open-pit Gold Mine in the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve**

Honourable President,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as President of Ghana and also write to you to express my grave concerns over Newmont Ghana Gold Limited's plan to construct an open-pit gold mine in the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve located at New Abirem in the Birim North District of Ghana's Eastern Region.

In spite of the concerns raised by a large number of Ghanaian advocacy NGOs about the intended project, I have recently heard that Newmont Ghana Gold Limited (NGGL) has secured the environmental permit to commence operations. I am greatly concerned that the project will have severe implications for the right to food of the communities who are dependent on the forest ecosystem for their livelihood. Indeed, the project represents a threat for food security, poverty reduction and conservation efforts in the area.

As a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Ghana is duty-bound under international law to respect and protect - among other rights - the human right to food, water, housing and health all of its citizens, including the families who would be affected by mining. The protection of the forest reserve is essential for the farmers, for their livelihood and sustenance.

As a person working for the human right to food in all parts of the world I would like to ask Your Excellency to:

- respect and protect the farmers' Human Right to Food and Water - as guaranteed in African and International Human Rights treaties Ghana is a state party to - by protecting rural communities' livelihoods, especially farm land, water bodies and forests
- ensure conservation as required by Ghana's obligations under the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Reserves and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

For this matter, I call on you to

- reject plans of Newmont Ghana Gold Limited to construct an open pit gold mine in the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve located at New Abirem;
- do all you can to prevent mining activities in other forest reserves in Ghana.

I trust your sound judgement and consideration of this case. Please inform me about the measures you intend to take in this regard.

Sincerely,