

PRESS STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

To All Media Agencies

18th May, 2022

Rescind decision to cede portions of Achimota Forest Reserve Status

We, the undersigned Civil Society Organisations are deeply concerned that part of the Achimota Forest, Accra’s one and only precious urban forest, has been degazetted and is no longer a Forest Reserve.

We are shocked that *“the President is satisfied that the land specified in the schedule is no longer required as a Forest Reserve”*, especially now when government is inviting companies to invest heavily in Forest Reserve restoration for the Green Ghana Day 2022.

We do not understand how degazetting part of Achimota Forest Reserve will *“ensure development that is consistent with the area of the Forest Reserve”* and instead believe the opposite is true: That ceding its Forest Reserve status will open it up to all types of development which will adversely affect the integrity of the area as a Forest Reserve.

In respect of the above concerns, we are urgently requesting the government to rescind Executive Instrument E.I. 144 (Cessation of Forest Reserve) 2022.

Accra cannot afford to lose any portion of its only Forest Reserve. Urban forests provide critical ecosystem services including removing Accra’s extremely high pollution, storing carbon, producing oxygen, and helping mitigate the floods that Accra is so prone to.

The particular area of the forest that the EI 144 refers to is a critical section of the Forest Reserve due to its position alongside the motorway, providing a protective barrier for the wildlife in the Forest Reserve and performing key ecosystem service functions to help control pollution from vehicles on the motorway and N1 George Bush Highway.

Maintaining natural areas in urban centres is also critical for people’s welfare, exercise, relaxation, and mental health. They also provide corridors for wildlife moving through the landscape.

#RESCINDEI144

#SAVEACHIMOTATFOREST

As concerned civil society organisations working for the people and environment of Ghana, we implore government to rescind the EI 144 and instead explore the diversity of restoration pathways that will secure the Achimota Forest in its entirety.

There are many green development pathways available that can also provide jobs for some of Accra's unemployed youth. Possible options include ecotourism with walks and bicycle rides through the forest; an educational centre sharing knowledge on the herbs, flowers and nutritious foods found in the forest; restoration and tree planting on degraded areas.

The degazetting of a portion of Achimota Forest Reserve will open up the discussions for other Forest areas chiefs and their subjects to advocate for the degazetting of portions of the forest reserves in their localities.

Besides rescinding EI 144, any encroachment on to the Forest Reserve must also be stopped immediately. Ghana's Forest Reserves are not only for those of us alive today.

Future generations must also be considered, otherwise their capacity to support themselves will be destroyed before they are even born, with decisions like these.

#RESCINDEI144

Signed By:

Legal Working Group

A Rocha Ghana

EcoCare Ghana

Civic Response

Nature and Development Foundation

Viridis Environmental Consult

Kasa Initiative Ghana

Ghana Wildlife Society

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