
8 September 2025

To:

1. His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Ghana
2. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Accra
3. The Minerals Commission, Accra
4. The Water Resources Commission, Accra
5. The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Accra

Distribution:

1. The Chief of Staff, Office of the President, Accra
2. The Regional Minister, Upper East Region, Bolgatanga
3. The Regional Director, EPA, Upper East Region, Bolgatanga
4. The Regional Security Council, Upper East Region
5. The District Chief Executive, Bawku West District, Zebilla
6. The Kusaug Traditional Council, Bawku
7. The Member of Parliament for Zebilla Constituency, Zebilla
8. All media houses

KUDU Opposes Zongoiri Mining Proposal, Urges Government to Withdraw Plans

The Kusaas Diaspora Union (KUDU), acting as the collective voice of the indigenous Kusaug people, writes to formally register an unreserved objection to the proposed Zongoiri Gold Mining Project as outlined in the Scoping Report submitted by Maripoma Mining Services. We respectfully submit that any attempt to proceed with open-pit mining in Zongoiri and its adjoining communities is unlawful, unconstitutional, and a grave violation of Ghana's national and international obligations for the following legal, scientific, and human rights reasons:

1. Legal and Regulatory Non-Compliance

1.1 Parliamentary Ratification & Surface Rights: Under Article 268(1) of the 1992 Constitution, all mining leases require Parliamentary ratification. There is no evidence that the purported 25-year lease granted to Maripoma has undergone this mandatory approval. Furthermore, mineral rights are distinct from surface rights under the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703) and L.I. 2176 (2012). No surface rights can be acquired without the landowners' free, prior, and informed consent. This consent has not been obtained.

1.2 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): The L.I. 1652 requires an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) based on transparent stakeholder consultations, including with all affected communities. Maripoma's consultations were limited and inadequate, falling short of both the letter and the spirit of the law.

1.3 Compensation & Resettlement: Under L.I. 2175 (Compensation and Resettlement), affected farmers and households are entitled to a full replacement cost of lost assets, crops, livelihoods, and cultural resources. No such plan exists, despite proposals to site mining pits in densely populated farming communities.

2. Threats to Environment, Health, and Livelihoods

2.1 Water Security: The project is situated between the White and Red Volta rivers, the primary water sources for downstream communities. Open-pit mining and tailings dams pose an imminent risk of toxic contamination with cyanide, arsenic, and mercury, as seen in Talensi (Upper East) and Obuasi (Ashanti). Peer-reviewed studies from Ghana confirm that heavy metals in mining rivers exceed WHO safe limits, leading to cancers, kidney failure, and congenital disabilities¹. In Obuasi, arsenic, cadmium, and mercury in water and crops were found above WHO standards, creating pathways for human exposure². Nationwide reviews estimate that over 60% of Ghana's water bodies are polluted, with illegal mining as the primary driver³.

2.2 Documented Health Risks: Studies have linked mining exposure to severe health consequences. For example, a hospital-based study in the Democratic Republic of Congo found significantly higher visible congenital disabilities in mining communities compared to non-mining areas⁴. Similarly, in Appalachia, USA, children born to mothers living near mountaintop mining had elevated risks of congenital anomalies, including neural tube defects⁵. Locally, systematic reviews in Ghana confirm associations between mining and miscarriages, respiratory diseases, and congenital disabilities⁶. Others suggest mercury exposure in Ghanaian artisanal gold-mining regions is strongly associated with kidney disease, liver damage, and neurodevelopmental disorders⁷.

2.3 Agricultural Livelihoods: Kusaug is primarily an agrarian region. Farming is the cultural backbone and the guarantee of food security. The displacement of thousands of indigenous farmers violates the right to food security under Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

2.4 Cultural and Ecological Heritage: Zongoiri is home to the sacred waterfall at Kianga and cultural groves that form part of Kusaug's identity and cultural heritage. These are recognized under UNESCO's conventions on intangible heritage. Their destruction cannot be compensated monetarily.

3. National and International Human Rights Obligations

3.1 Right to Life and Health: Under Article 13 and 34(2) of Ghana's Constitution, the State has a duty to protect life and ensure the realization of fundamental rights to health and a safe environment. Mining in a densely populated farming zone directly violates this duty.

3.2 International Law: The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 24, indicates that 'All peoples shall have the right to a general satisfactory environment favorable to their development.' This right has not been adhered to in the procurement process. Also, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) requires states to obtain free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from indigenous peoples before approving any project that affects their lands. No FPIC has been obtained in Kusaug.

The Community Demands

Mining communities in Ghana, including Obuasi, Tarkwa, and Talensi, have suffered irreversible damage to their rivers, soils, and health due to poorly regulated mining in those areas. Specifically, studies have documented congenital disabilities, miscarriages, respiratory disease, and contamination

of food crops in relation to mining⁶. As a country, Ghana has experienced multiple cyanide spills from gold operations, including at Tarkwa, highlighting the acute risks of toxic releases⁸. Mercury exposure in artisanal gold mining areas has also been associated with long-term renal and neurological harm⁷.

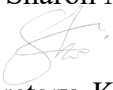
With these anticipated effects of mining in the Kusaug region, KUDU hereby makes the following demands on behalf of the people of Kusaug:

1. An immediate suspension of all activities related to the Zongoiri Gold Project pending a full independent investigation.
2. Revocation of the mining lease granted to Maripoma for non-compliance with constitutional, statutory, and international requirements.
3. A comprehensive, independent health and environmental baseline study covering all Kusaug communities before any extractive activity is considered.
4. Recognition of farming, water, and cultural rights of the Kusaug people as superior to extractive ventures.
5. Adoption of sustainable, community-led development alternatives in agriculture, tourism (Zongoiri waterfall), and heritage preservation.

Kusaug is not against national development. However, development must not come at the expense of the survival and dignity of its people. Mining in Zongoiri threatens to extinguish their way of life, health, and livelihood. Peer-reviewed evidence from Ghana and across the world shows that poorly regulated mining leads to cancers, miscarriages, congenital anomalies, and irreversible environmental damage. The people of Kusaug cannot be treated as experimental subjects in another mining-induced disaster.

As the collective voice of indigenous Kusaug, KUDU insists that the procurement of this project is unconstitutional, unlawful, and unacceptable. We call on the President, the Chief of Staff, and all relevant agencies to act swiftly to protect the people of Kusaug and their future.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Sharon Mumuni



Secretary, Kusaas Diaspora Union (KUDU).

References

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