

FDA, MME “Sinister Plan” Threatens Proposed Krahn-Bassa Protected Area

By Staff Editor
Feb 17, 2025



-Environment Media Watchdog Alarms over Planned Evasion

The proposed Krahn-Bassa protected area is reportedly facing a threat as environmental media watchdog, Journalists for the Protection of Nature (JPN Liberia), expresses concerns over alleged plans by the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and the Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME) to exploit the area for mining activities.

The watchdog group emphasizes the importance of preserving the Krahn-Bassa Forest and raises alarms about potential repercussions, including the strain on donor funding and the undermining of conservation efforts in Liberia.

“The Forestry Development Authority and the Ministry of Mines and Energy have a sinister plan to evade the proposed protected forest area, the Krahn-Bassa Forest situated in southeastern Liberia,” Mark Dahn, the Watchdog’s Program Manager said at a press conference over the weekend. “The FDA and Mines Ministry officials are also harboring plans to evade the Gola Forest National Park that is protected by the country’s conservation law.”

The group cautioned that if the designated protected forest area in River Cess County is utilized for mining activities, as reportedly advocated by FDA Managing Director Rudolph J. Merab and Deputy Mines Minister Fahnseth B. Mulbah, it could deter donors and jeopardize crucial funding essential for Liberia's conservation initiatives, historically backed by international partners like the European Union (EU) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

JPN Liberia Executive Director, Joseph O. Sayon, condemns the alleged actions of the FDA Managing Director and Deputy Mines Minister and urges them to reconsider their plans. The group calls for the protection of the Krahn-Bassa Forest and the Gola Forest National Park, highlighting the significance of conservation efforts in maintaining Liberia's forests and biodiversity.

“We consider this move on the part of officials of the FDA and the Ministry of Mines as a gross undermining of Liberia’s commitment to meeting the Bonn Challenge of conserving 1 million hectares, which constitutes 30 percent of Liberia’s forest area,” stated JPN Executive Director, Joseph O. Sayon, who accused FDA Managing Director Rudolph Merab and Deputy Mines Minister for Planning and Research, Fahnseth Mulbah of conniving to hand over a vast portion of the Krahn-Bassa Forest to GLM Mining Company, a subsidiary of Bea Mountain Mining Company, for mining purposes.

The Krahn-Bassa Forest is currently undergoing land formulation to complete the process of gazetting in preparation for legislative approval and enactment into law, emphasizing that JPN Liberia, as a civil society organization established since 2014, views this latest action on the part of FDA Managing

Director Merab and Deputy Mines Minister Mulbah as being detrimental to the principles of conservation and efforts of the donor community aimed at conserving Liberia's forests.

"I want to highlight that from 2006 to 2023, Liberia has made significant strides in promoting conservation activities through the FDA. These efforts led to the creation of the Krahn-Bassa Proposed Protected Area. Unfortunately, this important milestone is now threatened by the current FDA Managing Director, Mr. Rudolph J. Merab," Sayon told a news conference over the weekend.

Dahn and Sayon revealed that a recent visit by a JPN Liberia investigative team to communities near the Krahn-Bassa Proposed Protected Area unveiled that many local leaders and residents were initially supportive of conservation efforts. However, they are reportedly facing coercion by the FDA boss and others, including River Cess County Legislative Caucus chair, Senator Wellington Geevon Smith, to endorse mining operations in the region.

"It is also important to add that this unfortunate undertaking on the part of the FDA Managing Director and some officials of the Mines Ministry to evade a proposed protected area and a protected area, the Gola Forest, will scare away donors; leading to strain in needed donor support, thereby undermining Pillard-Five of the Arrest Agenda for Inclusive Development (AAID), and present the country to the rest of the world as being unserious in the fight against climate change," he maintained.

Liberia is known for its substantial portion of the Upper Guinea forest in West Africa, often referred to as the "third lung" of the world, which is crucial for biodiversity and human well-being. Recognizing the importance of this natural resource, the international community has invested millions of dollars in supporting forest conservation efforts to safeguard this valuable ecosystem for future generations.

One prominent contributor, the Government of Norway, provided \$150 million

in 2015 through the Liberia Forest Sector Project (LFSP) to aid in forest conservation and reduce carbon emissions, contributing to global climate change mitigation efforts.

This initiative aligns with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. Various countries and international organizations have also made significant financial contributions to protect Liberia's forests and preserve its national heritage.

"We cannot allow the efforts and resources of our partners to go to waste like that," Sayon said. They have spent a lot in this country to help us conserve our forest. There is no way that we can go back."

The concerns expressed by JPN Liberia highlight the importance of upholding environmental conservation principles and respecting the commitments made by Liberia in promoting conservation activities.

Sayon called on Mr. Merab and his associates to immediately abort their "sinister plan" of granting mining license in the Krahn-Bassa Forest, which is endowed with endangered species such as the flying lizard that is new to science.

"Also, having confirmed that Mr. Merab and his technical and commercial team will be traveling to the Gola Forest next week, to initiate a logging plan, which will subsequently pave the way for logging activities in the Gola Forest National Park, which is protected by law, we are calling on the FDA Managing Director and his accomplices to halt all planned activities in the Krahn-Bassa Forest, and the Gola Forest National Park," Sayon emphasized.

Liberia currently boasts five primary protected areas: Sapo National Park (established in 1983), Gola Forest National Park (2016), Grebo-Krahn National Park (2017), East Nimba Nature Reserve (2009), and Lake Piso Multiple Use Reserve (2011).

These areas cover extensive hectares and have brought significant benefits to

local communities through collaborative efforts between the Liberian government and various local and international NGOs focused on conservation work.

The partnerships have led to the implementation of diverse programs, such as alternative livelihoods, ecotourism, and Village Savings and Loans (VSLA), generating substantial income for communities.

In alignment with Liberia's goal to conserve one million hectares of forest, approximately 30% of the nation's forest cover, the Krahn-Bassa Protected Area was established in 2016 with support from USAID, the EU, and other stakeholders.