

26th February 2016  
Honourable Senator (Prof) Ben Ayade,  
Governor of Cross River State  
Governor's Office  
Calabar  
Cross River State  
Nigeria



***An Urgent Letter of Concern Regarding the Proposed Super Highway and Its Impacts on the Ekuri Community Forest***

Honourable Governor, Senator (Prof) Ben Ayade, we, the global Yes to Life, No to Mining Network send you our sincere greetings.

Yes to Life, No to Mining is a global network of communities, organisations and networks from every continent. We support communities to protect their livelihoods and critical ecosystems from unwanted or insensitive development and to find or continue practicing alternative forms of prosperity.

We wish to draw your attention to an urgent matter that has been brought to our attention. Approximately 33,600 hectares of the world-famous Ekuri community forest exists today in Cross River State, Nigeria. This tropical forest has been managed and community-conserved by the local people and communities for thousands of years. As such it is a rare global examples of sustainable lifestyles and the continuation of traditional livelihoods, culture, languages, spiritual and material culture. As the world faces 21st century sustainability and climate crises, we need to keep forests like Ekuri intact and learn from sustainable communities like those living in Ekuri.

We are aware of plans for a potential “Super Highway” Project, which, as currently planned, will affect this forest area and the larger Ekuri Community. Our partner in the Yes to Life, No to Mining Network, the Snowchange Cooperative, has interacted and investigated this situation through the work of Ph D Edwin Ogar and others during the United Nations Environmental Programme - IUCN “World Parks Congress” held sometime ago in Sydney, Australia.

Ekuri forest is of global socio-ecological importance and we understand that the communities of Ekuri have already written to you to oppose the planned Super Highway Project. There are plentiful examples worldwide where road building through rainforest areas place forests and local communities under huge pressure, leading to the interconnected destruction of the biological and cultural diversity that are the life blood of sustainability.

With this in mind we strongly support Snowchange’s proposal that this Super Highway Project should be abandoned in its current form due to the potential risks it poses the health of the Ekuri community forest and its traditional custodians.

Instead, we welcome Your government to start a new process with the local Indigenous communities and the keepers of the Ekuri community forest – a process that adheres to the United Nations International Labour Organisation 169 Protocol, Free, Prior and Informed Consent – FPIC Principles, UN CBD commitments and other national and

international legal measures to protect and preserve the unique territory of Ekuri community forest.

The Yes to Life, No to Mining Network joins Snowchange, the Indigenous and Community-Conserved Areas Consortium (a member of the IUCN), as well as national and international parties, such as the United Nations, in their commitment to continually monitor the situation with the Ekuri community forest weekly. We urge you to foster a positive decision on the issue.

If such measures can be taken to make sure the Ekuri community forest will be preserved for generations to come, guided, managed and owned by the traditional communities in a new partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we offer you our full support.

*With best wishes,*

*Mariana Gomez, YLNM Coordinator for Latin America*

*Juliana Thornton, YLNM Coordinator for Southern Africa*

*Guadalupe Rodriguez, YLNM Coordinator for Latin America and Spain*

*Tero Mustonen, YLNM Coordinator for the Eurasian Arctic*

*Hannibal Rhoades, YLNM Coordinator for UK and Northern Europe*

*On behalf of the Yes to Life, No to Mining Network*