

DECIMATION OF OGUNPA FOREST RESERVE IN OYO STATE: CONCERNED NIGERIANS

c/o Nigeria Conservation Foundation
Km 19 Lekki-Epe Expressway, Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria 106104

9th January, 2024

His Excellency,
The Governor of Oyo State,
Engineer Seyi Makinde
Office of the Governor,
Secretariat, Ibadan,
Oyo State, Nigeria.

Your Excellency Sir,

APPEAL TO HALT THE DECIMATION OF THE OGUNPA FOREST RESERVE IN IBADAN, OYO STATE

Your Excellency Sir, compliments of the season, and we pray this New Year ushers in the best part of your effort to bring prosperity and peace to Oyo State.

This letter is a follow-up to the one written you on 20th December, 2023 (please see attached copy). Since we did not receive any feedback, we are unsure you really received it. This one has some additional content, while some facts are repeated.

We write in regard to the information we have received, as well as what we have observed concerning the decimation and felling of the trees in the area in Ibadan, known and referred to as the Ogunpa Forest Reserve located behind Agodi Gardens, in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Your Excellency, we wish to bring the following critical issues to your attention:

1. The Ogunpa Forest Reserve is one of the oldest in the country, having been established in the 1950s as one of the first plantations of indigenous trees species in West Africa, and imported ones from India. The forest is also an important watershed to the Ogunpa River and helps to prevent flooding of the city of Ibadan. It is also critically important in terms of keeping the city cool as we face global warming.
2. From the satellite map of the Secretariat through Premier Hotel and Bodija axis, the Agodi Gardens and its associated forest is the **ONLY** green area in the city of Ibadan, and this destruction will remove the very last green area in the centre of the city of Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State.
3. This green space and Specially Forested Area offers unquantified ecosystem services to the immediate communities and the entire city of Ibadan. The proposed conversion into a residential estate or even fully commercial built-up area will have disastrous environmental and adverse bio-diversity consequences, including, but not limited to flooding. We again reiterate the fact that destroying forests that have taken over 70 years to grow will lead to an irreversible loss of biodiversity;

4. The United Nations (UN) has consistently emphasized the critical importance of preserving our natural habitats and combating deforestation to address the global climate crisis. As a matter of fact, 'Year 2023' was tagged by the UN as the '**Year of Ecosystem Restoration**' even as the African Development bank is committing millions of dollars to the planting of trees all over Africa.
5. The current destruction of the old Ogunpa Forest Reserve, behind Agodi Gardens, in the name of curbing criminal activities of miscreants are extremely alarming, especially as it is taking place shortly after the conclusion of COP28 which took place in Dubai and at which our country was greatly represented by a team led by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The act of decimating the Ogunpa Forest Reserve pits Oyo State and the Nigerian government against Nigeria's commitment to meet the United Nations' decisions.
6. The great flood of 1980 in the city of Ibadan that gave Ogunpa the national and international notoriety that it has still not lived down. After about 10 hours of heavy downpour of rain, recorded as more than four times of the 1978 flood, the city of Ibadan were overrun by flood. Hundreds of bodies were recovered from the rubble of collapsed houses and destroyed vehicles which had been swept away by the flood and several hundreds of people were rendered homeless.

Research carried out by experts about the causes of the 1980 flood include the massive deforestation exercise on the lower slopes of the Mokola Premier Hill to make way for the construction of the Cultural Centre at Mokola, Ibadan. (Research by *Oguntala and Oguntoyinbo -1982*). It is the remainder of the forest that your government is now proposing to destroy. Please permit us to quote excerpts from one of the research documents:

'3.4 Disruption of hydrological cycle changes in forest cover alter catchment water balances and stream flows. The effect of destruction of forest cover on catchment water balance and runoff dynamics depends on the climate, topography, soils and the type of forest. Water quality and yield are also affected by tree harvesting. Flooding seems to increase as a result of broad-scale deforestation in catchment zones,

Indiscriminate tree felling in hilly areas reduces the ability of soil to absorb water thereby inducing high volume of run off.... The removal of forest cover during tree harvesting predisposes the environment to destructive actions of wind and rainstorm.

Devastating destruction of farmland and houses have been reported in areas where indiscriminate tree felling had taken place."

Your Excellency, despite the billions of Naira funded by international development agencies including the World Bank that channelization of Ogunpa River project has not been concluded and different parts of the City of Ibadan continue to suffer from flash floods.

It is for the above reasons that your predecessor—in-office, Late Senator Isiaka Ajimobi, listened to wise counsel and abandoned his plans to destroy the Agodi Forest Reserve for

commercial gains. Your Excellency, we urge you to do the same, as this is an unpopular move and many of your people who understand the implication are not pleased.

It is on record that in around 2002, one of our revered former State Governors, HE Lam Adesina (late) had indeed approved the creation of a residential estate on this same site. The Director of Forestry in the Ministry of Agriculture, now Venerable Wale Sanda, presented strong reasons through the Commissioner of Agriculture which convinced His Excellency to rescind his earlier approval.

Sir, we are aware of your determination to improve the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of Oyo State so that you can complete the good work you are doing to improve the lots of the people of Oyo State. We, however, appeal to you that this should not be done at the expense of the lives and properties of your people. The forest, if left, can be traded for in the carbon credit market, thereby generating the needed IGR.

OUR PRAYERS

1. There are many viable opportunities for Oyo State to generate significant revenue from the protection of its forests, including the Ogunpa Reserve Forest. An example is the sale of forest carbon credits on the international markets. Many states in Nigeria have started to develop forest carbon credit projects in order to generate revenue by selling these on the international market.
2. Sir, additionally, we urge you to emulate Lagos State where laws have been enacted for the preservation of trees, such that defaulters will suffer serious penalty if they cut the trees even within their compounds without obtaining permission from the relevant government agency. Strengthen and enforce existing environmental laws and regulations of Oyo State to curb illegal logging, land clearing, and other activities contributing to habitat destruction. This should include the addition of new clauses into the Oyo State Forest law to enable the generation and sale of carbon credits from the protection of the State's forest resources.
3. We respectfully urge Your Excellency to halt the clearance of the Ogunpa Forest Reserve and remove the logging/forest clearance vehicles that are destroying the tress at an alarming rate. Sir, whatever your aides or the developer might have told you, this move is deeply unpopular amongst your people and we are in no doubt that this is not the type of legacy you want to leave for your administration.
4. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including local communities, environmental organizations, professionals in the built environment, and experts, to develop and implement effective conservation and reforestation initiatives that will highlight the potential benefits from carbon credit revenue as they help to protect these forests. Additionally, New Towns development can be properly planned along the Outer Circular Road. That will be a growth pole for future development along that corridor.

FINAL REQUEST

Our final request is for a meeting with you so that we can articulate our points to you and members of your cabinet. Sir, the mandate to sign this letter was given by the various organisations listed in Table 1 below.

Should you require to speak to us, any of the following people can be contacted:

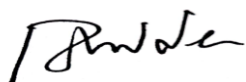
1. Oladipo Olasope (Bodija Estate Residents' Association); +234-8033589913.
2. Dr. Joseph D. Onoja (Nigeria Conservation Foundation); +234-8069211645.
3. Dr. (Mrs.) Fatsuma Olaleru (Nigerian Society for Conservation Biology, & Nigeria Tropical Biology Association); +234-8077800748.
4. Dr. Rosalie A. Modder-Oyefeso (Save our Green Spaces); +234-8067029639
5. Dr. Salamatu Fada (Coalition for Biodiversity Conservationists of Nigeria, JAVS Environmental Care Ltd); +234-8067748887.
6. Prof. Funmilola Ajani (Initiative for Biodiversity Conservation in Sub-Saharan Africa); +234-8039694175.
7. Mr. Tunde Morakinyo (Africa Nature Investors Foundation); +234-907732723.
8. Mr. Joseph Faluyi (Great Green Wall of Africa); +234-7080000761.

Your Excellency, apart from the organizations whose representatives are listed above, all the organizations that have endorsed the contents of this letter are contained in the Table 1 below.

Your Excellency, we trust your commitment to the well-being of the people of Ibadan and Oyo State and the conservation of its natural heritage, and we are prepared to work with your administration to achieve your dreams for Oyo State.

Sir, please be assured of our highest regard at all times, even as we remain,

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Rosalie A. Modder-Oyefeso



Prof. Funmilola Ajani

Dr. Fatsuma Olaleru

Table 1: List of organisations that have endorsed the content of the letter

Name of Conservation Group	Name of Leader	Logo
Coalition for Biodiversity Conservationists of Nigeria (CBCN)	Dr. Salamatu Fada	
Nigeria Tropical Biology Association (NTBA)	Dr. Fatsuma Olaleru	
Nigerian Society for Conservation Biology (NSCB)	Dr. Fatsuma Olaleru	
Africa Nature Investors (ANI) Foundation	Mr. Tunde Morakinyo	
Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF)	Dr. Joseph D. Onoja	
Biodiversity Preservation Centre (BPC)	Prof. Edem A. Eniang	
Wildlife Society of Nigeria (WISON)	Prof. Augustine Ogogo	

Development Agenda (DA)	Mr. Patrick N. Ezeala	
JAVS Environmental Care Ltd.	Dr. Salamatu Fada	
Initiative for Biodiversity Conservation in Sub Saharan Africa	Prof. Funmilola Ajani	
Save Sahara Network (SSN)	Prof. Folaranmi D. Babalola	
Save our Green Spaces	Dr. Rosalie A. Modder-Oyefeso	
West African Conservation Network (WACN)	Mr. Patrick Egwu	
Sustainability and Conservation Education for Rural Areas (SCERA)	Dr. Jacinta Abalaka	
International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Forest Center	Mr. Adewale Awoyemi	
Biodiversity Conservation Club, University of Ibadan	Mr. Nathaniel Owolawi	
Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), Oyo State Chapter	Arc. Olufemi 'Lola Oyenekan	
Bodija Estate Residents' Association (BERA)	Oladipo Olasope SAN	
Great Green Wall of Africa (GGWoA)	Mr. Joseph Faluyi	
Cooperation for Accelerating Sustainable Development on Africa (CASDA)	Mr. Olatunde Obasola	
Nigerian Environmental Study Action Team (NEST)	Dr. Gloria Ujor	
Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Nigeria	Prof. Labode Popoola	