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BREAKTHROUGH SCIENCE SOCIETY

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A Voluntary Organization Committed to the Cause of Science, Culture and Scientific Outlook

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Statement on the Supreme Court Order on the Aravalli Hills

The Aravalli Hills are among the world's oldest mountain systems and form a critical ecological lifeline for north-western India. Extending across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi, the Aravallis play a vital role in groundwater recharge, climate regulation, biodiversity conservation, and in preventing desertification in one of the most water-stressed and densely populated regions of the country.

Recently, the Supreme Court of India adopted a new elevation-based definition of the Aravalli Range, recognizing only landforms rising more than 100 metres above local relief as part of the protected system. This definition is to be used for preparing a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining, and no new mining leases are to be granted until the plan is finalized.

While the stated intent of scientific clarity and sustainable mining appears reasonable, the altitude-based criterion raises serious ecological and legal concerns. The Aravalli system is not a collection of isolated tall hills, but an interconnected landscape of ridges, slopes, valleys, and hillocks that together sustain groundwater recharge, soil stability, biodiversity, and regional climate balance. Excluding landforms below 100 metres effectively removes legal protection from a large majority of this ecosystem, creating a dangerous loophole for mining, real estate, and infrastructure development.

Such a narrow definition undermines decades of environmental safeguards and threatens to accelerate groundwater depletion, intensify heatwaves and dust storms, and weaken ecological resilience across Rajasthan, Haryana, and the Delhi-NCR region. The continuation of existing mining operations further risks legitimizing ongoing ecological damage while regulatory frameworks remain incomplete.

The Aravallis are not merely geological features; they are living natural infrastructure essential to the environmental and water security of millions. Any dilution of their protection will have far-reaching and irreversible consequences.

We therefore urge the Government of India and the Hon'ble Supreme Court to reconsider and withdraw the 100-metre criterion, and to adopt a holistic, science-based conservation framework that recognizes and protects the Aravalli Range as an integrated ecological system.

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