



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

# Max-Planck-Institut für evolutionäre Anthropologie

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

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The Minister of Arts and Culture, Republic of South Africa

c/o The Acting Director General: 'Vusithemba Ndima'

## Department of Human Evolution

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15 April 2016

To whom it may concern,

It is with great concern that I learn of the imminent destruction of the Canteen Kopje archaeological site as a result of illegal diamond mining. The Canteen Kopje site is a unique source of information on the behaviour of people in Africa, and especially South Africa 500'000 years ago and its destruction would signify the loss of a key part of South Africa's heritage.

By allowing diamond mining to damage this significant site, the South African government would destroy artefacts and specimens which hold important clues into the origins of our ancestors and their way of life. As director of the Department of Human Evolution at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, I strongly support the work of archaeologists around the world to preserve heritage listed sites in order to uncover keys to our past which will allow us to better understand human origins. South Africa, often referred to as "the cradle of humankind", has yielded a treasure trove of material documenting human evolution and is recognised worldwide among the scientific community as a key country for the development of palaeoanthropological studies.

I hope that you will use your authority to stop the irreversible damage that mining would cause on the landscape of this area and the artefacts which hold the keys to significant discoveries in the future. Such damage would not only represent a major loss for the South African nation, but also for the rest of humanity.

Sincerely,

Prof. Jean-Jacques Hublin