

Chinese aluminum deal threatens rare biodiversity in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil.

A deal signed between the governments of Brazil and China in May this year is posing a serious threat to the rare biodiversity of Brazil's Atlantic Rainforest as claims are filed to mine aluminum.

The Atlantic Rainforest is classified by Conservation International as one of the world's top biodiversity hotspots whose conservation status is critical.

The state government of Minas Gerais has recently received DM 15.000.000 for conservation, part of which is going to establish the Serra do Brigadeiro State Park, where several previously unclassified species have recently been discovered.

The Park is also home to the muriqui monkey (*Brachyteles hypoxanthus*) which is the most endangered primate in the New World, with an estimated population of around seven hundred.

Yet more than 40 claims have been registered for mining bauxite deposits in the Park and its buffer zone, and twelve of these are in an advanced stage of licensing. None of the inhabitants of the region had any prior knowledge of the mining claims and under Brazilian law it is only possible to ask for a public hearing during the preliminary licensing stage.

Despite Brazil's comprehensive environmental laws which are based on the North American model, mining companies are still able to obtain licenses without the knowledge of the public, putting in danger one of the world's most fragile ecosystems.