

STATEMENT BY THE HON. MINISTER OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES
RELATING TO GOV'TS POSITION ON SMALL SCALE MINING (SSM)

Recognizing its potential, Government initiated the regularization of small scale gold mining in 1989 with the promulgation of the Small Scale Gold Mining Law, PNDCL218, with the main objectives of :

- Providing technical support to small scale miners,
- Capturing all the minerals produced into official channels;
- Generating employment and
- regulating the industry in such a way that the miners operate in an efficient environmentally friendly manner It was also to provide job opportunities to the rural folks

In addition to the establishment of the District Offices of the Minerals Commission to provide technical support, the Precious Minerals Marketing Company was established to provide ready markets for the minerals to be produced. More marketing companies have been provided since then to offer competitive pricing system for the miners.

As a result, Small scale mining has become widespread in Ghana. Minerals being produced by small scale miners include gemstones, industrial minerals, gold and diamonds. But gold and diamonds are the two precious minerals that have a very high attraction for small scale miners in Ghana.

SSM generates substantial employment to the youth of Ghana; indeed it is estimated that it employs about 500,000 people directly and a further 500,000 may indirectly benefit from the activity. The minerals mined also generate significant foreign exchange for the country; the SSM sector produced 560,715oz of gold and 354,443cts of diamonds in 2009 representing 18% of total gold production and 100% of total diamond production.

In view of the potential socio-economic benefits to the country, Government is very supportive of the small scale mining industry, and for gold and diamond alone 177 licenses were granted since 2009, 124 of them being granted this year.

The procedure for the acquisition of small scale mining license is fairly simple as detailed below:

- Only Ghanaians of at least 18 years can be granted Small scale mining license
- A prospective applicant for a small-scale mining licence notifies the Small-Scale District Centre of the Minerals Commission of his or her intentions.
- The District Officer inspects the site to determine its suitability and prepares a report.
- If found suitable the area is demarcated and site plans are prepared by the prospective licensee.
- A notice of intention to allocate the area for small-scale mining is published at the District Assembly for twenty-one (21) days.
- If no objections are made, the applications are subsequently submitted together with the field report by the District Officer to the Head Office..
- The Minerals Commission checks to ensure that the area is not already under licence.
- The applicant is then advised to obtain an Environmental permit from the EPA.
- The Minister then issues the License.

Government has over the years implemented a range of measures to encourage small-scale miners, to operate in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner. However, Government's intention is to build upon these achievements by implementing further initiatives to enhance the development of an efficient, modern and sustainable small-scale mining sector, involving both precious and industrial minerals. These include:

- Siting and equipping District offices of the Minerals Commission in proximity areas designated for small-scale mining, to ensure efficient extension service provision.
- Identification of suitable areas, carrying out limited geological investigation on them and then blocking them out for the benefit of small-scale miners.
- Establishment of revolving fund of about GH¢700,000.00 for organized small-scale mining groupings (e.g. co-operative and associations) to benefit from.

- Mitigation of the negative impacts of small-scale mining through education and enforcement of rules and regulations.

Illegal Mining (galamsey)

In spite of all these support from the Government, in recent times, illegal mining activities are on the increase. This is being facilitated by Communities, Chiefs, land owners, farmers and some opinion leaders who arrogate power to themselves to give right to people to mine.

The rising incidence of illegal mining, in addition to destruction of land, pollution and siltation of water bodies is what has led to the increasing number of accidents with the major reported ones being the following:.

- Wassa Dadieso where 9 people were alleged to have died in 2006
- Noryem-Nyafoman where about 40 were alleged to have people died following mine subsidence
- Abooso, near Wassa Akropong where 15 people were alleged to have died last year when due to under cutting, the mine collapsed and covered them.
- The recent one at Akyempim, near Dunkwa where an embankment collapsed flooding the pit resulting in the death of unspecified number of people. 17 bodies were found after some rescue efforts.

It must be noted that illegal mining includes:

- Mining without the requisite license and permit.
- Even where a licensed is secured, if mining is done in unapproved area
- Mining while the application is still being processed
- Mining in prohibited places such as:
 - Forest and game reserves
 - Close to rivers and in water bodies
 - Close to residential areas and other infrastructures

The 1992 constitution and the Minerals and Mining Act 2006, (Act 703) vests the authority to grant mineral rights solely in the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources and for that matter no other person has the right to do so.

I will want to state categorically therefore that all stakeholders including sponsors, Chiefs, land owners, farmers found granting the right to any one to mine commits an offence and will be dealt with if caught. Indeed if any illegal mining activity is found

anywhere or on any farm, the land owner or the farmer will be arrested for questioning and possible prosecution

The Ministry is providing funds to facilitate the movement of a Task Force made up of the Military and the Police to move around the length and breadth of the Country to clamp down on illegal mining activities. This can be effective if information on the location of such illegal activities will be made available to us. Next week the Task Force will move to flush out illegal miners within the Subinso and Krokosoa forest reserve.

I will like to appeal to all Ghanaians to provide information on any illegal mining activity in their localities to the authorities. In view of the recent deaths particularly with reference to the loss of lives, Government is hopeful that major stakeholders will collaborate with Government to minimize if not completely eliminate the menace of illegal mining.

Taking note of the location and the numbers of small scale miners, the location and numbers of the Minerals Commission's District Offices will also be reviewed periodically to ensure effective and efficient support for monitoring and regulating small scale mining activities.

The Government will ensure that all Small Scale Mining District Committees are set up to assist the Minerals Commission's District Offices to monitor the activities of small scale mining as provided in Minerals and Mining Act 2006, Act 703

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION