

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL
RESOURCES, HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, AT THE
MINISTER'S PRESS BRIEFING, HELD AT THE MINISTRY
OF INFORMATION, ACCRA, ON TUESDAY 28TH FEBRUARY,
2023**

Hon. Minister for Information;

Deputy Ministers for Lands and Natural Resources;

Heads of the various Agencies under the Ministry;

Friends from the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

A. INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, I want to thank the Ministry of Information for continuously providing us with a platform to inform the good people of Ghana about the policies and programmes being implemented in support of the vision of the President of the Republic, H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, to bring the much-needed development to our people.

As I did last year, I will update you on developments in the lands and natural resources sectors of our country under three broad themes, namely, mining, forestry and land, and in so doing, I will present an update on the work of the various agencies and Projects under the Ministry. I will begin with mining.

B. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MINING SECTOR

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, mining continues to be one of the main pillars of our economy, with mining activities taking place in all the sixteen (16) regions of our country, and providing direct and indirect jobs to some three million (3,000,000) people.

The sector retained its position as the leading source of export revenue. Export receipts in 2022 from gold alone was over Six point Six Billion US Dollars (US\$6,600,000,000.00), while diamond generated almost Three point Nine Billion US Dollars (US\$3,900,000.00).

For over a decade now, we have not had any new large scale mining operation in the country. Happily, following significant investments in exploration, four (4) new large scale mining operations will start production within the next two and half years, including the mining of lithium, one of the critical minerals required for the green energy transition. There are, also, significant investments in the redevelopment and expansion of existing mines. After reviving the Obuasi mine in 2019, the Bibiani mine, which has been dormant for seven (7) years, has also been revived, and production started in October last year. These investments will

result in a significant increase in our mineral production, and revenue accruing to Government.

The commitment of the Government of President Akufo-Addo remains to ensure the sustainable exploitation of these minerals for the benefit of the people of Ghana, the true owners of our natural resources. To this end, several policies are being implemented in the areas of local content and local participation, value addition, regulation of small scale mining, and development of mining communities, among others. I will take these areas one after the other and highlight some of the developments since my last update.

I. Local Content and Local Participation

As part of measures to promote job creation in the mining industry through the use of local expertise, goods and services, last year, pursuant to the Minerals and Mining (Local Content and Local Participation) Regulations, 2020 (L.I. 2431), the Minerals Commission increased the procurement list of goods and services reserved for Ghanaians from twenty-nine (29) to forty-one (41). This year, the Commission has again reviewed the list, and added nine more goods and services to increase the list from forty-one

(41) to fifty (50). The new additions include the provision of medical services at mine sites, construction and management of Tailings Storage Facilities, assaying, motor rewinding, plant installation activities, conveyor idlers, cutlass epoxy resins and slurry water and sewage valves.

We have also increased the provision of financial, insurance and reinsurance services reserved for Ghanaians, from twenty percent (20%) to a minimum of sixty percent (60%). The provision of these goods and services by Ghanaians will ensure that we retain, here in our country, some Three Billion US Dollars, (US\$3,000,000,000.00) which would have otherwise been exported.

Stakeholder engagements for large scale mining companies to list on the Ghana Stock Exchange have also been completed, and very soon, and these companies would commence the processes for listing.

II. Value Addition

Ladies and Gentlemen, one of the key policies of the Government of President Akufo-Addo, is to ensure that we add value to our

mineral resources to ensure that they have adequate linkages to the other sectors of the economy. To this end, we have, through a Public – Private Partnership, established a gold refinery which will soon commence refining our gold. We have had several engagements with Rand Refinery of South Africa, a London Bullion Marketing Association (LBMA) Referee, to secure LBMA certification for gold refined in Ghana, to enable us easily export and trade our refined gold on the international market.

PPMC's jewellery subsidiary is now able to produce gold tablets, engrave and plate jewellery, and this will be a major boost for their work. The plan, going forward, is to establish a Gold Souk, a market place for manufacturing and marketing of gold articles, while exploring other avenues such as online trading in gold, bullion banking and safe deposit services.

The implementation of the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC)'s Four-Project Agenda is on course. Drilling and Mineral Resource Estimation on two (2) hills in Awaso, under Project 1, will soon commence, to expand the existing mine.

Mineral Resource Estimation on Project 2, Nyinahini Block B, will be completed by the end of the first quarter of this year to pave way for the development of the mine.

Negotiations with an investor for Project 3, Nyinahini Block C and Kyebi Mine with a refinery, have completed, awaiting Cabinet's approval. And discussions for the selection of a strategic partner for Project 4, the expansion and modernisation of Volta Aluminium Company (VALCO), are far advanced, and is expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of this year.

For our iron ore resources, Mineral Resource Estimation is underway at the Akpafu deposit to determine its tonnage, grade and value. A Masterplan for the development of an integrated iron and steel industry has been completed, awaiting Cabinet's approval.

III. Diversification of mineral resource base

The Ghana Geological Survey Authority (GGSA) continues to intensify limestone exploration activities in the Mamprusi West District to develop limestone mines to feed the cement industry. Over three thousand acres (3,000acres) of land has been identified suitable for clinker production.

The Authority has, also, identified and evaluated over one thousand two hundred and seventy-five metric tonnes (1,275 Mt) of Clay resources at Assin Fosu and its environs in the Assin North and Central Districts of the Central Region, suitable for the production of high quality assay crucibles, bricks, tiles and electrical porcelain.

Over two hundred thousand acres (200,000 acres) of land have, also, been explored for iron ore in the Oti Region, to support the promotion and development of an integrated iron and steel industry in the country.

Government's policy for the development of these minerals, as well as lithium and other green minerals, which we are fortunate to have, is to pursue a path that fosters optimal socio-economic development, through effectively and efficiently exploiting, managing, and retaining the full value chain of the mineral in country, to ensure that Ghanaians, who are the actual owners of these minerals, benefit from them.

IV. Regulation of Small Scale Mining

Distinguished Guests, the small scale sub-sector continues to be very crucial to our economy. It supports the lives and livelihoods

of millions of our people while contributing significantly to our gold and diamond production.

To support this sector, last year, Government reduced withholding tax on unprocessed gold by small scale miners, which was introduced in 2015, from three percent (3%) to one point five percent (1.5%). This has resulted in a massive increment in gold exports from small scale mining, from three thousand four hundred and twenty nine point nine one ounces (3,429.91oz) in 2021, to twenty-two thousand one hundred and fifty eight point two five ounces (22,158.25oz) in 2022, that is over five hundred percent (500%) increment.

The Ministry continues to implement its two-pronged approach of law enforcement and reformation to deal with illegal mining. Thus, river bodies remain "Red Zones" for mining, while reconnaissance, prospecting and/or exploration in Forest Reserves continue to be suspended, except in exceptional circumstances.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you will recall that when I took my turn here last year, I announced that the Ministry was procuring speed boats to patrol our rivers to rid them of illegal mining. I am happy to report that five of these boats were procured, and have been patrolling our river bodies. We have also trained river guards who

will be deployed to guard the rivers day and night. Operation Halt II will continue to support these measures. The Ghana Association of Small Scale Miners (GNASSM) has, also, adopted River Birim, and is working closely with the Ministry to halt illegal mining activities on this river.

We have also inaugurated all eighty-three (83) Small Scale Mining Committees in the various mining districts, in accordance with section 92 of the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703), to assist the District Offices of the Minerals Commission to effectively monitor, promote and develop mining operations in their jurisdictions. This is the first time, since the passage of Act 703, that Small Scale Mining Committees have been established in all mining districts in the country. Under the Ghana Landscape Restoration and Small Scale Mining Project, we are training members of these Committees to build their capacity efficiently perform their functions.

These measures have yielded some positive results, with most of our river bodies visibly clearing up and the turbidity levels improving. That is not to suggest that we have rid the country of illegal mining. As speak, the cartels involved in these illegalities continue to operate, and are finding every means to outwit us. But

we will not relent on our efforts, we will continue to adopt the necessary measures to ensure that we come to grips with this canker.

Accordingly, we are in the process of amending Act 703, to expand the ban on the floating platform, popularly referred to as “Changfan”, and expressly provide for the decommissioning of equipment used in illegal mining.

We are also implementing the Minerals and Mining (Mineral Operations – Tracking of Earthmoving and Mining Equipment) Regulations, 2020 (L.I. 2404), and we expect track some four thousand (4000) excavators and other earth moving equipment. So far, a control room has been established at the Minerals Commission, and seventy-five (75) excavators at various mine sites have been installed with tracking devices.

In the area of regulatory, policy and operational reforms, we are undertaking a general review of the Mining Policy adopted in 2014, and the Minerals and Mining Act which was passed in 2006, to align them with current developments in the mining industry.

The Community Mining Scheme remains one of our key policies to promote responsible small scale mining as an alternative to illegal small scale mining. Last year, fourteen (14) of these schemes were

commissioned. And last month, I commissioned the first Community Mining for the year in Bongo-Soe in the Bongo District of the Upper East Region. In the coming days, new Community Mining Schemes will be commissioned in Bole in the Savannah Region, Wa in the Upper West Region, and Nangruma in the North East Region. All these Schemes are supported with Gold Katchas to help small scale miners extract gold from the ore without the use of mercury.

The Ghana Geological Survey Authority (GGSA) has developed a mineral resource map for hundred (100) districts in the country, and continues to undertake geological investigations to block out more areas for small scale mining. This year, the Ghana Landscape Restoration and Small Scale Mining Project will support the Authority to undertake geological investigations on the Dunkwa Block covering a total area of about one hundred square kilometres (100km²). The Project will, also, support the Authority to acquire geo-physical data over an area of approximately one thousand six hundred square kilometres (1600km²) to support responsible small scale mining.

The National Alternative Employment and Livelihood Programme, which President Akufo-Addo launched in 2021, is also being

implemented to provide alternative sources of income for communities affected by the fight against illegal mining. The Programme employs several youths in direct and indirect employment in the production of seedlings in support of the Green Ghana Day, and reclamation of degraded mined lands. Currently, reclamation is ongoing over one thousand hectares (1,000 ha) of degraded lands in Ashanti, Eastern and Western North Regions.

This year, the Apprenticeship, Skills Training and Entrepreneurship module of the Programme will be rolled out, and is expected to provide training for some five thousand (5000) youth in agriculture, technical, vocational, industrial, and mining skills. The Programme will, also, facilitate the establishment of community mining schemes across the country.

The digitised National Assay Laboratory of the Precious Minerals Marketing Company (PMMC), which was commissioned by Vice President Dr. Bawumia last year, has contributed to the effective monitoring of gold exports from small scale mining, and increased Government revenue. Last year, PMMC paid taxes of over Six Billion Ghana Cedis (GHS6,000,000,000.00), made up of corporate taxes, withholding taxes, Valued Added Tax and Pay As You Earn.

The Company, in collaboration with other government agencies, is implementing Government's flagship Gold for Oil programme to help curb the incessant demand for foreign exchange on the market and give Ghanaians cheaper fuel. The Company intends, this year, to commence the processes of establishing regional offices, to support the purchase of gold from small scale miners, and check gold smuggling. This will be complemented by a robust IT infrastructure to be established with the support of the Ghana Landscape Restoration and Small Scale Mining Project to trace gold produced from small scale mining.

V. Improving Service Delivery

To ensure effective service delivery through decentralisation of the services of the Minerals Commission, new office complexes are being constructed at various mining districts. They include District Offices in Akim Oda and Bibiani, which would be completed by the end of the first quarter of this year, a five-storey Regional Office in Tamale, and a seven-storey Regional Office in Kumasi together with a modern laboratory for the testing of equipment. Preparations are, also, underway to commence construction of District Offices in Wa, Bole, Koforidua, Bolgatanga, Kyebi and Prestea.

The Commission will, this year, with the support of the Ghana Landscape Restoration and Small Scale Mining Project, upgrade the Mineral Cadastre Administrative System (MCAS), to bring on board the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Water Resources Commission (WRC), to provide a one-stop-shop license acquisition platform, to reduce the turn-around-time for licence acquisition.

VI. Development of Mining Communities

Ladies and Gentlemen the Minerals Development Fund (MDF), established under the Minerals Development Fund Act, 2016 (Act 912), continues to provide financial resources from mineral royalties, for the benefit of mining communities. In accordance with Act 912, twenty-one (21) Local Management Committees (LMCs) have been inaugurated across the country. The LMCs are responsible for the management and utilisation of funds allocated to mining communities. Twenty-eight (28) projects are being undertaken by the 21 LMCs. They include classroom blocks, community centres, CHPS compound, modern markets, mechanised boreholes, among others.

In addition to the above, the Fund, through its Alternative Livelihood Programme, has distributed over eleven point six million (11,600,000) Hybrid Oil Palm seedlings to some forty-eight thousand (48,000) farmers across mining communities in the country. The Fund also continues to support research institutions to undertake research into mining and build local capacity for the mining industry.

VII. Appiatse Reconstruction

Following the tragic Appiatse incident on 20th January, 2022, Government committed to reconstruct the community into a modern, green and sustainable community as a model for rural development. Construction begun last year, and the first phase of the project is about forty percent (40%) complete. This phase includes the construction of one hundred of twenty-four (124) housing units made up of two to seven bedroom houses, a school block with sanitary facilities, and the construction of roads within the community. One hundred and six (106) out of the one hundred twenty-four (124) housing units and a six-unit classroom block are at different stages of completion, with some being roofed as we speak. We are hoping to move the victims of the incident from their

temporary accommodation back to their community before the end of the year.

The recommendations of the Health and Safety Committee established after the incident, chaired by the Vice Chancellor of George Paa Grant University of Mines and Technology (UMat), Prof. Richard Amankwaah, are also being implemented, and has led to a lot of reforms in the sector. A comprehensive review of the regulations on explosives, the Minerals and Mining (Explosives) Regulations, 2012 (L.I. 2177) has also been completed, and will soon be laid before Parliament.

C. FORESTRY

I. Forest Protection and Enhancement

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, our timber and timber products export increased significantly from three hundred and two thousand one hundred and eighty three point zero four six cubic metres (302,183.046m³) in 2021, to three hundred and forty-three thousand four hundred and forty point zero eight one cubic metres (343,440.081m³) in 2022, representing an increase of thirteen point six five percent (13.65%). This generated a total amount of One Hundred and Fifty Three Million, Eight Hundred and Sixty-One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty Seven Euros and Sixty-Seven Cents (€153,861,837.67).

Government's overall policy for the forestry sector is to protect our forest and wildlife resources, while at the same time, restoring what we have lost over the years. In pursuance of this, reconnaissance, prospecting and/or exploration activities in forest reserves continue to be suspended, except in exceptional circumstances and the harvesting, salvaging, trading, exporting, and importing of Rosewood, as well as the issuance of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild

Fauna and Flora (CITES) permits for the export of Rosewood continue to be banned.

The Forestry Commission, with the support the Ghana Armed Forces, have cordoned off all Forest Reserves and Wildlife Protected Areas, to rid them of illegal mining and illegal logging. Last year, two hundred twelve (212) suspects were arrested by the Rapid Response Team of the Forestry Commission for various forest and wildlife offences. These suspects are standing trial at various courts across the country.

The Team, also, seized and/or decommissioned scores of equipment and forest products, including forty-four thousand five hundred and twenty-two (44,522) assorted lumber, fifty-four (54) vehicles, seven (7) shot guns, one hundred and seventy-one (171) chainsaw machines, seventeen (17) excavators, ninety-five (95) pumping machines, thirteen (13) power plants, nine (9) changfan machines and forty-one (41) illegal structures.

As part of measures to combat illegal logging and ensure sustainable forest management, the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) of the Forestry Commission, organized workshops to promote the use of lesser-used wood species in construction and housing development.

While protecting the forest, we continued with our aggressive afforestation and reforestation programme, including our flagship Green Ghana Project. Last year, on the Green Ghana Day, a total of twenty-six million, five hundred and sixty-three thousand, six hundred seven (26,563,607) seedlings were distributed, out of which twenty-four million, five hundred and fifty-two thousand, nine hundred and twenty-five (24,552,925) seedlings were verified to have been planted, exceeding our target of twenty million (20,000,000)

This year, on the Green Ghana Day, our target is to plant at least ten million (10,000,000) trees. This is to enable us devote much attention to nurturing the over thirty million trees that have already been planted, and ensure that all the trees planted reach maturity.

In addition to the Green Ghana Project, we are, in partnership with the Departments of Parks and Gardens, and Urban Roads, implementing a Green Street Project, under which we are planting trees in the medians of streets and avenues of major roads in our cities to beautify the cities while contributing to the fight against climate change. The project is currently being implemented in Accra from the Tetteh Quashie interchange, through Shiashie and

Okponglo, to Legon PRESEC. It will be scaled up to cover all major roads in Accra and all sixteen (16) regional capitals of our country.

The Forestry Commission continued the implementation of the Forest Plantation Strategy. Under this Strategy, over ten million (10,000,000) seedlings were produced, and a total of sixty-six thousand three hundred and fifty-five point four two hectares (66,355.42) of forest was planted in 2022, made of up established forest plantations, enrichment planting and tree-on-farms planting.

This year, the Forestry Commission will continue implementation of this Strategy to increase the forest cover of our country. The Commission will also continue reclamation of degraded Forest Reserves through private partnership and other initiatives.

The Forest Plantation Development Fund, through the Youth in Plantation Establishment as an Occupation Programme, has sponsored seventy-five (75) unemployed graduates to go into forest plantation. Over three hundred and seventy-five hectares (375 ha) of land in Forest Reserves have been cultivated in the Ashanti, Bono and Bono East Regions under this Programme, with an additional thirty-two hectares (32 ha) cultivated in off-reserves in the Volta and Oti Regions. The Fund has also provided seven hundred seventy thousand (770,000) seedlings to some two

hundred and ten (210) farmers to establish plantations in the Volta and Oti Regions.

The Fund will, this year, begin a community based plantation development programme, to reforest an estimated area of six hundred hectares (600 ha) of degraded Forest Reserves. The Fund, in partnership with the International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation (INBAR), will also promote the establishment of bamboo plantation in various traditional areas as a means of livelihood to communities, as well as restore degraded mined lands.

Ladies and Gentlemen, one of the priorities of the Ministry is to revamp the timber industry. Last year, a Technical Committee, made up of industry players and officials of the Forestry Commission, was constituted to develop a comprehensive strategy to revamp this industry which used to be very vibrant some years back. The Committee has submitted its report, and we are in the process of implementing the recommendations of the Committee to bring the industry back on its feet. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure we process and add value to our timber resources to ensure that they have linkages to other sectors of the economy.

II. Wildlife Protection and Ecotourism

Distinguished Guests, you will recall that last year, I updated you on the Ecotourism Handbook we launched to promote ecotourism in our country. This has contributed significantly to increasing the number visitors to our ecotourism sites and zoological gardens. Despite the Accra Zoo being closed for more than three months, visits to the various ecotourism sites increased by fifteen percent (15%), to three hundred and forty-three thousand, four hundred and forty (343,440).

Following an unfortunate incident at the Accra Zoo, we, also, refurbished the zoo to make it safer and more convenient for patrons. Discussions are still ongoing for the establishment of three additional zoos in Koforidua, Tamale and Takoradi, with the ultimate aim of establishing a zoo in all sixteen regional capitals.

With the support of the Ghana Armed Forces, we have trained two hundred eighty six (286) wildlife officers, and forty-five (45) field staff in law enforcement, field craft, first aid, weapon handling and other field operation tactics, to strengthen the protection of our national parks and zoos.

I am happy to report that the new Wildlife Management Bill, which was approved by Cabinet last year, has been laid before

Parliament, and is expected to be passed before the end of this sitting of Parliament. When passed, it will give the Forestry Commission a lot more authority to effectively manage our national Parks, zoos and Resource Reserves. It will also promote private participation and community engagements in wildlife management and improve law enforcement in protected areas.

III. Climate Change Initiatives

As a respected member of the international community, we continued the implementation of our various initiatives aimed at halting climate change, including the Ghana REDD+ Strategy. I am happy to report that under the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme, the first module of the REDD+ Strategy which was launched by President Akufo-Addo in 2019, we recorded emission reduction of nine hundred and seventy-two thousand four hundred and sixty-five tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (972,465 tCO₂^e) for the first accounting period between June and December 2019, which has been verified and validated. This has generated results-based payment of Four Million Eight Hundred and Sixty-Two Thousand Two Hundred and Eighty United States Dollars (US\$4,862,280), which we have begun receiving. This makes

Ghana the second country in Africa, and the third in the world, to receive result-based payments from the Carbon Fund.

Implementation of the Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project, the second programme under the REDD+ Strategy, launched by Vice President Dr. Bawumia last year, is also ongoing, we are confident that we will receive result-based payment from this programme too. The Forestry Commission is currently working on funding for the implementation of the other programmes under the Strategy.

In order to increase our result-based payments, we intend, this year, to develop an action plan for the signing of a binding emission reduction purchase agreement with the Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest Finance (LEAF) Coalition. This will enable us to access part of the One Billion United States Dollars mobilised by the Coalition to support tropical and subtropical jurisdictions in making substantial reductions in their emissions from deforestation.

Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen, I am, again, happy to report that at the just ended COP 27, held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, Ghana was made the co-Chair of the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership (FCLP), a new political forum that brings

governments and other partners together to implement solutions that help reduce forest loss and land degradation while supporting sustainable development. This was in recognition that the various initiatives that Ghana has been implementing in support of the fight against climate change.

The Cocoa and Forest Initiative (CFI), which are implementing with cocoa and chocolate producing companies, has also contributed significantly to reducing deforestation and forest degradation in cocoa growing areas, and enhanced forest law enforcement and cocoa traceability.

IV. Forest Investment Programme

Distinguished Guests, the Forest Investment Programme (FIP) is a mix grant and loan from the World Bank, aimed at, among others, protecting and increasing our forests estate, and piloting the viability of contracting commercial loans for plantation development. I am happy to announce that Parliament has ratified the On-lending agreement for the disbursement of Seven Million US Dollars (USD7,000,000.00) to support small to medium scale plantation development and stimulate private sector investment in commercial forest plantation. Some Eighty-Five Thousand hectares

(85,000 ha) of forest will be planted under this programme, through private participation in forest plantation.

D. LAND

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, land remains one of the main catalysts for development. Building an effective, transparent, responsive and orderly land administration which is steeped in integrity, is therefore, *sine qua non* to national development. Development in this sector includes:

I. Implementation of the Land Act

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036) provides a firm foundation to deliver an efficient land administration that is fit for purpose. The Lands Commission continued public education and implementation of this Act, including stakeholder engagements with traditional authorities, religious bodies, corporate entities, among others.

In furtherance of this, a National Land Conference, the first of its kind in the history of our country, and the second consultative assembly on land since the coming into force of our national Constitution, was held in December last year, to, among others, increase public awareness and potential benefits of Act 1036, foster high level support and ownership of interventions to tackle land

governance, and to empower, and develop capacities of land sector stakeholders.

The Conference adopted a number of recommendations, including systematic surveying and mapping of land boundaries, a review of the 1999 Land Policy, digitalisation of land administration within three (3) years, and developing an alternative dispute resolution mechanism to resolve land disputes. On the recommendation of the Conference, a multi-stakeholder platform is being established, with a secretariat at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, to implement these recommendations.

Preparations are, also, underway for the development of various Legislative Instruments to ensure the efficient implementation of the Act, and they expected to be completed by the third quarter of this year.

II. Digitalisation of Administration Services

Ladies and Gentlemen, even before the recommendation of the Land Conference, Government had commenced processes to ensure that the Lands Commission goes fully digital, as part of Government's digitalisation agenda. This, we are convinced, is the

surest way to deliver an effective and efficient land administration in the country. In addition to the online platform that enables clients to access selected services, including consolidated searches and stamp duty assessments, online, the six regional offices of the six new Regions, namely, Ahafo, Bono East, North East, Oti, Savannah, and Western North, operate fully digital.

Plans are far advanced to engage a private partner, through a Public Private Partnership, to deliver a holistic digitalisation of land services, decentralisation, improved office infrastructure, and staff capacity building to ensure expeditious service delivery in the land sector. The technical documents are currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Finance, and we are hopeful that we will secure the necessary approvals to commence this all-important programme this year.

III. Protection of Public Lands

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you are aware, there is widespread encroachment of public lands across the country, due to several years of inaction. Pursuant to article 258(1) of the Constitution, and section 5 of the Lands Commission Act, 2008 (Act 767), which mandates the Lands Commission to, on behalf of Government,

manage public lands, as well as, section 236 of the Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036), which enjoins the Commission and its agents, or any appropriate agency, to take steps to recover encroached public lands, the Commission and the Ministry are taking several measures to protect all public lands.

The Lands Commission, in collaboration with the Ghana Police Service, has undertaken a number of operations to recover encroached public lands. The Commission is, also, working with the Ghana Police Service to provide protection for all public lands and prevent them from further encroachment. Through this collaboration, adequate logistics are being provided to the Ghana Police Service to undertake regular patrols and improve visibility on public lands to deter encroachers.

Additionally, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has constituted a Public Lands Protection Team, chaired by the Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and Member of Parliament for Atwima Nwabiagya North, Hon. Benito Owusu-Bio, to support the efforts of the Lands Commission and the Ghana Police Service in the protection of public lands.

We are, also, engaging Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies

(MMDAs), to take steps to protect lands acquired for their use, or which fall within the jurisdiction of the Assemblies, in accordance with section 236 of Act 1036.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me use this opportunity to remind all of us, that since the coming into force of Act 1036, encroachment of public lands is a criminal offence punishable by a fine of up to two thousand penalty (2,000) units, that is Twenty-Four Thousand Ghana Cedis (GHS24,000.00) and a term of imprisonment of up to three (3) years, while the unlawful appropriation or sale of public land carries a punishment of up to ten thousand (10,000) penalty units, that is, One Hundred and Twenty Thousand Ghana Cedis (GHS120,000) or a term of imprisonment of up to fifteen (15) years. I hope that our friends from the media will join is in educating the general public about this law to deter people from encroaching on public lands.

IV. Infrastructural Development

The Lands Commission continued with its infrastructural development to provide a conducive working environment for the staff of the Commission. The construction of the seven-storey Lands Commission Head Office is about eighty-five percent (85%)

complete, and is expected to be completed and handed over by the end of this year. Phase II of the Greater Accra Regional Office is also expected to be completed by the end of the third quarter this year.

Construction of the Tema District Office complex commenced in February, 2022 and the first phase is expected to be completed by the end of the first quarter of this year. The new edifice, when completed, will provide the needed support to staff to be able to effectively handle the numerous land services emanating from Tema and its environs.

V. Jubilee City

Government has decided to redevelop the eighty acres (80 acres) of land around the Kotoka International Airport, stretching from Stanbic Heights, through Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) Regional Office, to the Ministry of Defence, into a modern commercial hub. Agencies located within the enclave, including the Ghana Police Service, DVLA, Ghana Airport Company Limited, and Ghana Meteorological Agency, are being relocated to Kwabenya, close to the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission.

A five hundred and four (504) one and two bedroom self-contained housing units, with a school complex, a clinic and a recreational area, made up of an astroturf football field and a tennis court, together with a standby generator, has been constructed for the Ghana Police Service. This edifice is about ninety-five percent (95%) complete, and it is expected to be handed over by the end of next month.

A petrol filling station, with six (6) underground fuel tanks or dispensing pumps, lube service bay and a mart as well as a modern police station complex, is also being constructed adjacent the Kwabenya Police Station, to complement this.

A modern DVLA Office complex, accommodation for Ghana Airport Company Ltd and the Ghana Meteorological Agency, as well as a workshop complex for Ghana Police Service, is also being constructed at Bohye around the same area. This will pave way for the movement of all the agencies located within the Jubilee City enclave for the redevelopment to commence.

The Lands Commission and the architect are here, and I will yield to them to give you a short presentation on the how the new Jubilee City will look like after my presentation.

VI. Stool Land Administration

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands, in accordance with article 267 of our national Constitution, mobilised and disbursed a total of One Hundred and Twenty-Five Million Ghana Cedis (GHS125,000,000.00) to the stated beneficiaries, namely stools or skins, traditional authorities, and the Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). The Office continues to monitor the various Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), to ensure that their share of stool land revenue is utilised for the benefit of the community. Some of the projects undertaken by the MMDAs from stool land revenue include Community Health Planning Services (CHPS) Compound, schools, and pavement of Lorry Parks, amongst others.

To ensure efficient mobilisation of stool land revenue, last year, the Office inaugurated its Western North Regional Office; opened two (2) District Offices at Suame in the Ashanti Region, and Jema in the Bono East Region; opened eight (8) new revenue collection points at Busunya, Nsuta, Banda and Techiman, all in the Bono East Region; Nkwatia in the Eastern Region; Dapoore-Tindongo in the Upper East Region; Salaga in the Savannah Region, and Sagnarigu and Bimbilla in the Northern Region.

As part of Government's digitalization agenda, the Office, with the support of the German International Cooperation (GIZ), has developed an OASL Revenue Application (OASL RevAPP), to support the collection of stool land revenue. Staff in all nine (9) operational regions of the Office have been trained, and are using the App for data collection, billing and payments.

In accordance with Act 1036, the Office, last year, supported the establishment of four (4) of Customary Land Secretariats at Gmantanbo, Bimbilla in the Northern Region; Aduamo, Nkawkaw in the Eastern Region; and Nungua and Bortianor in the Greater Accra Region. This year, three (3) new Customary Secretariats are expected to be opened.

The Office, also, facilitated the demarcation of three hundred and forty-nine (349) farm parcels for smallholder farmers in the Hemang Traditional Area of the Central Region, to improve tenure security and documentation of land transactions at the local level.

VII. Boundary Protection

The Ghana Boundary Commission, guided by the principle of good neighbourliness, continued to engage our neighbours to delineate

and demarcate our boundaries and protect the land and maritime boundaries of our country. The construction of a land boundary terminus (Pillar 1) on the Ghana – Togo border, as well as the construction of other pillars along the International Boundary Line, are complete, and paves way for us, this year, to commence the second phase of the boundary delineation.

Maritime negotiations with Togo will also continue to ensure an amicable resolution of our maritime boundary issues. In line with this, the Ghana Boundary Commission, in collaboration with the Ghana Navy, will undertake joint maritime boundary inspections along the eastern and western frontiers to evaluate maritime assets and assess cross-boundary violations and activities at sea that affect Ghana's territorial integrity.

Land boundary reaffirmation exercises with our neighbours in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso continue unabated, and joint community sensitisations will be conducted in selected border communities along the international boundaries, prior to the field reaffirmations, to facilitate the education of border communities on the need for concerted efforts in protecting the boundaries.

To operationalise the implementation of the decision of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), in respect of

the Ghana Côte d'Ivoire maritime boundary dispute, the Ghana Boundary Commission will continue to engage the National Boundary Commission of La Côte d'Ivoire to properly manage the common international boundaries between the two countries and constitute a measure for security, peace, and facilitation of greater cooperation between the two countries.

To build and enhance the capacities of stakeholders in relevant maritime frameworks and laws, as well as maritime boundary dispute pre-emption and resolution, the Commission will, this year, hold an international conference on "***Maritime Boundaries and International Law in Africa.***" This will help littoral African countries, including our neighbours, to gain an understanding of maritime frameworks and laws that govern the maritime space globally, to ensure the proper exploration and management of marine resources.

E. CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen, these are some of the highlights of developments in the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. We understand that the resources we have been entrusted to manage are for the people of Ghana, and our duty is a fiduciary one which requires us to responsibly and intelligently ensure that Ghanaians benefit from them.

Hon. Deputy Ministers, Friends from the Media, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to assure you, and the good people of Ghana, that Government, under the distinguished and outstanding leadership of President Akufo-Addo, will continue to adopt and implement policies necessary for the effective protection, preservation, management and utilisation of the lands and natural resources of our country for the benefit of the Ghanaian people.

I thank you for your attention.