

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL
RESOURCES, HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, AT THE
OPENING OF THE WORLD GOLD COUNCIL WORKSHOP,
HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER, 2022, AT THE FIESTA ROYALE
HOTEL, ACCRA**

Representatives of the World Gold Council;

Chief Executive Officer of the Minerals Commission;

Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Chamber of Mines;

Captains of the Mining Industry;

Representatives of the Ghana National Association of Small-Scale
Miners;

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is always a delight to join you, our partners in the exploitation of our mineral resources. And I am delighted to see so many of industry players from different parts of the world gathered here, in our vibrant city of Accra, for this all-important Workshop.

Ladies and Gentlemen, when I spoke at the Fifth National Conference on Human Resource Management in the Mining Industry, organised by the Ghana Chamber of Mines, a couple of weeks ago, in Obuasi, I called on the Chamber to play a more active role in the fight against illegal mining. I did so with the firm belief that our collective effort will yield more results, and prevent the occasional clashes between large scale mining companies and illegal miners.

Today, I am happy, that under the auspices of the World Gold Council, this Workshop is being organised on the role of large scale gold mining companies in promoting responsible artisanal and small scale gold mining. This is very timely, and I want to thank the leadership of the World Gold Council and the Ghana Chamber of Mines, for putting together such an important workshop and for the invitation to address this gathering.

Since its establishment in 1987, the World Gold Council has continued to promote market development in the gold sector through improved understanding, access and trust, and its new focus on the interface between large scale and small scale mining is very commendable.

I am aware, for example, of the recent report published by the Council on lessons for managing the interface between large scale and artisanal and small scale gold mining, and the role of large scale mining companies in building a constructive relationship between these sectors.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, gold, for us in Ghana, is a historic and cultural commodity. It is not for nothing that prior to independence, our country was called Gold Coast. Before the arrival of the early Europeans, sometime in the fifteenth century, our forebears were panning and dredging for gold from rivers and streams, with rudimentary equipment like shovels, pickaxes, and hoes. Gold obtained from these basic mining methods became one of the major commodities for the Trans-Saharan caravan trade from the then Gold Coast, through Morocco and Egypt, to medieval and renaissance Europe. Indeed, according to Professor Raymond Dumett, a renowned mining historian, one of the reasons the Portuguese, the first Europeans on our land, sailed to our country, was to get gold to shore up their depleting reserves in Lisbon.

But it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that large scale mining companies started operating in the country, following reports about the colony's richness in gold by journalists and soldiers who were returning to England after the British War with the Asantes. All this while, the chiefs and people who owned the land had absolute control over the mineral resources in them and the local communities continued to mine alongside large scale mining companies.

Even after all mineral resources in their natural state were vested in the President in 1962, small scale mining continued to co-exist with large scale mining, although informally, and without any regulation. In 1989, Government decided to regularise and regulate the small scale mining industry, through the passage of the Small Scale Gold Mining Law, 1989 (PNDCL 218), which reserved this industry for only Ghanaians.

Since its formalisation, gold production from small scale mining has increased from some Five Hundred Thousand ounces (500,000oz) in 1990 to almost three million ounces (3,000,000oz) in 2020. Today, the small scale sector contributes about a third of our total gold production. Unfortunately, as a result of its impact on the environment in recent years, small scale mining has, sadly, become associated with environmental degradation and water pollution.

The Government of President Akufo-Addo, however, believes that small scale mining can, and must be done sustainably and responsibly to contribute, meaningfully, to our national economy. It is for this reason that Government has been implementing several policies and programmes aimed at promoting responsible and sustainable small scale mining.

We have, for example, revamped Community Mining Schemes, a community-owned small scale mining that promotes local participation in responsible and sustainable mining. We have developed an Operational Manual to regulate their operations to ensure environmentally-sound mining practices.

We have, also, introduced a mercury-free gold processing equipment known as Gold Katcha, to prevent the use of mercury in gold processing, and fulfil our obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The National Alternative Employment and Livelihood Programme, which was launched by President Akufo-Addo, also seeks to provide alternative sources of livelihood to those engaged in illegal and unsustainable mining practices.

Lately, we have had to adopt more stringent measures, including the declaration of river bodies as red zones for mining, the ban on reconnaissance, prospecting and/or exploration in Forest Reserves, the launch of Operation Halt II to rid river bodies and forest reserves of illegal mining activities, the introduction of speed boats and river guards to patrol and protect our river bodies, ban on the manufacture, sale and/or use of the floating platform, popularly referred to as Changfan, which are used in the pollution of water bodies, and the enhancement of the punishment regime for persons involved in illegal mining.

While taking these preventive measures, in partnership with the Ghana National Association of Small Scale Miners, we launched the Responsible Small Scale Miners Award Scheme, to recognise and reward small scale miners who are committed to responsible and sustainable mining practices. And through the Ghana Landscape Restoration and Small Scale Mining Project, we are strengthening integrated natural resource management and enhanced governance in small scale mining.

These measures, undoubtedly, have yielded some results. However, we still have more to do to come to grips with this menace. We recognise the complexities involved in this fight, and the recalcitrant nature of the cartels involved, largely because of the huge sums of money involved in this enterprise.

But we are committed to work with all stakeholders to ensure that we build a responsible, sustainable and environmentally-sound small scale mining industry. We need the cooperation of the large scale mining industry in this effort. Indubitably, the large scale mining industry is one of the most highly regulated industries in the country, and companies in this industry must bring their experiences to bear to support and promote sustainable small scale mining practices.

I am convinced that this workshop, which brings together senior officials of large scale mining companies across the world, provides a unique platform for such knowledge sharing, to build stronger partnerships and introduce more innovative ways to transform and promote responsible artisanal and small scale mining.

I am happy to see representatives of the Ghana National Associations of Small Scale Miners join in this workshop. As you are aware, Environment, Social and Governance issues are taking centre stage, globally, and have become the basic standards for regulating and evaluating institutional performance based on environmental responsibility, social welfare and economic growth. And these principles are not only applicable to large scale mining, but applies, equally, to small scale mining. Large scale mining companies, however, have the capacity and the resources, to set the pace, and carry along small scale miners.

Distinguished Guests, I am aware of the annual environmental (AKOBEN) audit and the posting of Reclamation Bonds by Large Scale Mining companies under the supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as audits conducted by the Minerals Commission. Government is developing a roadmap to work with you to implement similar measures in the small scale mining sector.

Representatives of the World Gold Council, Chief Executive Officers, Captains of Industry, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, large-scale mining and small scale mining, are two sides of the same coin. They are both aimed at exploiting our mineral resources for the benefit of our people, using different methods and resources. They can, and they must, mutually co-exist. I must commend, here, some of your members, who have voluntarily ceded part of their concessions for community mining schemes. But that should just be the beginning, large scale mining companies that use highly skilled methods must work closely with small scale miners to ensure that they, also, mine responsibly.

We cannot have one aspect of the industry promoting environmentally-sound practices, while the other is destroying the gains made. We must work together, and with host communities, to safeguard our environment, and provide opportunities for host communities to reduce the appetite for venturing into dangerous activities like illegal mining.

The vision of President Akufo-Addo, to make Ghana the mining hub of Africa, where all mining and mining related activities, from exploration to downstream production, and from research to innovation, will be centred, requires that we promote both large and small scale mining industries, and invest in value addition to ensure that the mining industry has adequate linkages to other sectors of the economy. Government is fully committed to this course. Let us, therefore, work together, and build a responsible, viable, sustainable and environmentally-sound mining industry, both large and small scale, for the good of our country and our planet.

On this note, I have the singular honour to declare the three-day Workshop on the management of the interface between large scale and artisanal and small scale mining duly opened.

I wish you fruitful discussions, and hope that the outcome of this Workshop will, immensely, contribute to Government's efforts at building a responsible and sustainable small scale mining industry.

I thank you for your attention.