

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL
RESOURCES, HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, AT THE
COMMISSIONING OF ONE HUNDRED (100) MERCURY-
FREE GOLD PROCESSING EQUIPMENT (GOLD KACHA),
HELD AT INDEPENDENCE SQUARE, ACCRA, ON MONDAY,
6TH JUNE, 2022**

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic;

The Greater Accra Regional Minister;

Ministers of State;

Hon. Members of Parliament;

Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives;

The Chairperson of the Minerals Commission;

The Chief Executive Officer of the Minerals Commission;

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

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today marks a very important milestone in our quest to deal with illegal small-scale mining in our country, whilst, at the same time, promoting viable, sustainable and environmentally-sound small scale mining.

This, is a further testimony to the vision of the President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, to bring the much-needed development and prosperity to all Ghanaians.

Mr. President, since you charged us to tackle the age-old menace of illegal mining, which has resulted in the destruction of vegetation and the pollution of our water bodies, we have adopted a two-pronged approach, i.e., law enforcement and reformation of the sector.

In the area of law enforcement, following the holding of the National and Regional Dialogues on Small Scale Mining, where we built a national consensus on the way forward, we have held engagements with all sixteen (16) Regional Ministers and their respective Regional Security Councils (REGSECs), to lead law enforcement in their various jurisdictions.

River Bodies continue to be “Red Zones” for mining, while reconnaissance, prospecting and/or exploration in Forest Reserves continue to be suspended, except in exceptional circumstances. Forest Guards of the Forestry Commission have been working with the relevant security agencies to enforce this ban, and we are in the process of recruiting and training river guards, to protect our river bodies.

We have also resourced the Inspectorate Division of the Minerals Commission, with logistics and personnel, to carry out their inspectorate and regulatory functions. In February this year, on your behalf, Mr President, I handed over to the Commission, twenty (20) pick-up vehicles, ten (10) blast monitors, one hundred and seven (107) desktop computers; sixty-eight (68) laptops; nineteen (19) printers; eleven (11) photocopier machines; one hundred and two (102) uninterruptible power supply (ups); five (5) scanners; three (3) projectors; three (3) survey equipment; two (2) plotters; and one (1) backup storage device, to support the operations of the Commission. This, officials of the Minerals Commission, indicate to me, is the biggest single retooling of the Commission since its establishment.

Mr. President, we have, also, placed a ban on the manufacture and sale of the floating platform, popularly referred to as “Changfan”, and we are amending the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703) to expand legally the scope of this ban.

In partnership with the Ministry of Defence, Operation Halt II continues to support these law enforcement measures. Admittedly, there are still considerable challenges, but we will not relent until we eliminate this canker.

Mr. President, in the area of regulatory, policy and operational reforms, we have decentralised the work of the Minerals Commission to the Regional and District Offices, to make access to information and applications for licences easier. In addition to this, the Commission has also rolled out online application forms to allow people apply for licences from the comfort of their homes. Simply put, the Minerals Commission is undergoing a total overhaul, under its dependable Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Martin Kwaku Ayisi.

Significantly, a thorough vetting process is currently underway to validate multiple applications for small scale mining licences, compiled by the Ghana National Association of Small-Scale Miners. This process, is being expedited and, sooner rather than later, I intend to approve the applications of those who will pass this rigorous vetting process. Our goal is to ensure that genuine Ghanaians are involved in genuine small scale mining businesses.

Mr. President, in October last year, you graciously launched the National Alternative Employment and Livelihood Programme (NAELP), to provide alternative sources of livelihood to those affected by the fight against illegal mining.

And we have revamped the Community Mining Schemes, and developed an Operational Manual to promote responsible and environmentally-sound small scale mining.

We have, also, in partnership with the Ghana National Association of Small-Scale Miners, instituted a Small-Scale Miners Award Scheme, to identify and reward responsible small-scale miners, as a way of encouraging responsible small-scale mining.

And today, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here for President Akufo-Addo to commission one hundred (100) mercury-free gold processing equipment, known as **'Gold Kacha'**.

Many small-scale miners rely on mercury to extract gold from the ore. The practice, however, has serious environmental and health impacts on communities in which they are used. Apart from contaminating water bodies and destroying aquatic life, high exposure to mercury by inhalation can result in damage to the nervous, digestive and immune systems. In children, for example, exposure to mercury can cause physical and mental disabilities.

The experts have warned of dire consequences if urgent action is not taken to eliminate the use of mercury in small scale mining. It is for this reason that the world adopted the Minamata Convention on Mercury, which Ghana ratified on 23rd March 2017, under the leadership of President Akufo-Addo. Under this Convention, State Parties are to take measures to reduce, and, where feasible, eliminate the use of mercury in artisanal and small-scale mining.

The Gold Kachas Mr. President is about to commission today is a step towards fulfilling our obligation under the Minamata Convention, protecting the health and lives of small scale miners, and the natural environment, and, above all, protecting our population from the debilitating hazards of this chemical.

At the maiden edition of the Small-Scale Miners Award, Commodity Monitor, dealers in the Gold Kacha, in partnership with the Ministry, promised to give the Overall Best Small Scale Mining Company one Gold Kacha. And today, Mr. President will present this to Daakye Mining Enterprise, the winner of this prestigious award.

Mr. President, Ministers of State, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the policies and strategies being implemented by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, under the leadership of President Akufo-Addo, are to promote viable business for

Ghanaians who intend to work in the mining industry, whilst, at the same time, protecting the environment. This is part of the broader vision of the Akufo-Addo Government to make Ghana the mining hub of Africa, where all mining and mining related activities, from exploration to downstream production, and from innovation to research, will be centred.

Yes, we recognise the complexities of the small-scale mining industry and the intractable nature of the negative practices associated with it. Let us face it, what we are dealing with is gold, which is money. Thus, those involved, both the gold barons, foreigners and Ghanaians alike, who finance this illicit business from the comfort of their mansions, and the “goro boys” on the ground, would not relent in their efforts.

That said, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me reiterate the unflinching commitment of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to persevere, until we are successful at constructing, here in Ghana, a viable, responsible, sustainable and environmentally-sound small scale mining sector which contributes, meaningfully, to the national economy of our country. Let us all work together to make this noble vision a reality.

I thank you for your attention.