

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER FOR
LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, HON. SAMUEL A.
JINAPOR, MP, AT THE 2ND ANNUAL TWO-DAY
TRANSFORMATIONAL DIALOGUE ON SMALL SCALE
MINING, HELD AT SHEILA'S EXECUTIVE HOTEL,
SUNYANI, ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH MAY, 2023**

Chairperson;

Bono Regional Minister;

Chairman and Members of the University of Energy and Natural Resources Council;

Vice Chancellor of the University of Energy and Natural Resources;

Members of Parliament;

High Commissioner of Canada to Ghana;

Director-General of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission;

Vice Chancellor of the George Grant University of Mines and Technology;

Chief Executive Officers;

Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives;

Principals, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, and Faculty Members of the University of Energy and Natural Resources and other sister Universities;

Captains of Industry

Our revered Chiefs;

Small Scale Small-scale Miners;

Students;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I thank the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UNER), and particularly the School of Mines and Built Environment, for instituting this Transformational Dialogue on Small Scale Mining, which is in its second year, and for the invitation to deliver the keynote address at this year's edition.

Apart from it being in accord with the University's mission of promoting the development of human resources and skills to solve energy and natural resources challenge, this Dialogue creates a unique platform to undertake in-depth discussions on one of the most pressing issues, not only in our country, but across the globe, the sustainable exploitation of natural resources.

In recent years, the world's resources have come under severe stress due to rapid population growth and urbanisation, increasing agricultural production, an incipient demand for raw materials to meet the needs of our modern-day sophisticated lifestyles, and climate change. The demand for raw materials, globally, is said to have doubled in the last twenty (20) years.

This increasing demand for resources is, also, contributing to the climate crisis, thereby worsening the pressures on these resources, causing a form of vicious cycle between climate change and resources. Governments across the world are, therefore, taking measures to address these emerging challenges and improve the sustainability of land and the resources they provide.

Mr. Chairman, as most of you may be aware, just last week, in partnership with the Graphic Communications Group Limited, we held a two-day Dialogue, which the President of the Republic graciously opened, on Harnessing Our Natural Resources Responsibly for Sustainable Collective Good, where we focused on the broader issue of the exploitation, management and utilisation of our natural resources.

Today and tomorrow, through the instrumentality of the University of Energy and Natural Resources, under the able leadership of its Vice Chancellor, Prof. Elvis Asare-Bediako, we zero in on the vexed issue of small scale mining. And the theme chosen for this Dialogue, ***"Sustaining Environmental Security and Human Rights in Small-scale Mining Operations in Ghana,"*** couldn't have been more apt.

Inherent in this theme is the recognition of the importance of small scale mining, but also, its attendant consequences on our environment and the fundamental human rights of those affected by this sector.

The question: to mine or not mine?; has been a historical one among philosophers, environmentalists, mineralogists, metallurgists, and other scholars. In his book, *De re Metallica*, published posthumously in 1556, the German Scholar and Metallurgist, Georgius Agricola, waded into this debate, addressing some of the philosophical arguments against mining at the time, such as the intrinsic worthlessness of gold and silver, the dangers mining pose to miners, and the impact of mining on the environment.

For most environmentalists, mining is just a destruction which must be stopped altogether. The former United States Secretary for Interior and Representative for Arizona, Stewart Lee Udall, mostly referred to as "**Advocate for Planet Earth**," for example, is noted to have remarked that "***Mining is like a search and destroy mission.***"

Indeed, few years after the continent's largest mining investment conference, "**the Investing in African Mining Indaba**," begun, a group of environmentalists launched a parallel conference dubbed "***The Alternative Mining Indaba***," to discuss alternatives to mining.

On the other hand, many industrialists support the Miners' Creed, that says "***If you can't grow it, you have to mine it.***" Adherents of this school of thought believe that the earth provides us with so many raw materials that must necessarily be mined for development.

Mr. Chairman, while this age-old debate will still continue, even after my generation, what is not in doubt is that the exploitation of our mineral resources and the protection of our natural environment, as well as the protection of human rights, are not mutually exclusive, but can peaceably co-exist. The question, therefore, to my mind, respectfully, should not be whether to mine or not to mine, but how to mine sustainably and responsibly in a way that protects the natural environment and the rights of persons affected by mining.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, mining continues to be the bulwark of our national economy. But for many years, small scale mining remained illegal, until it was formalised in 1989 through three sets of laws, the Mercury Law (PNDC Law 217), the Small-Scale Gold Mining Law (PNDC Law 218) and the Precious Minerals Marketing Corporation Law (PNDC Law 219).

Since its formalisation, small scale mining has increasingly been contributing to our gold output, reaching in excess of forty percent (40%) in 2018. Last year, for example, the small scale mining sector produced a total of seven hundred and twelve thousand, four hundred and five ounces (712,405 oz) of gold, bringing in almost One point Two Billion United States Dollars (US\$1,200,000,000.00) in export receipts.

Today, all diamonds produced in the country are from small scale mining, which in 2022 amounted to eighty-two thousand two hundred and fifty-one point nine nine carats (82,251.99 ct) and generated some Three point Nine Million US Dollars (3,900,000.00) in revenue.

Apart from their contribution to our gold and diamond output, the small scale mining sector is a source of employment for thousands of people, and supports the lives and livelihoods of millions of our citizens. Unfortunately, the increasing illegalities associated with the sector, and their effect on the environment has, sadly, resulted in small scale mining being associated with environmental destruction.

Mr. Chairman, small scale mining, undoubtedly, can, and must be done responsibly and sustainably. Our forebears mined for centuries, using simple methods such as panning and dredging, with hammers, chisels, and digging hoes, before the introduction of foreign tools and machinery for large scale mining in the mid to late nineteenth century. Indeed, the renowned mining historian, Professor Raymond Dumett, reports that some forty thousand ounces (40,000oz) of gold was exported, annually, from the then Gold Coast between 1471 and 1750, all obtained from artisanal mining using simple tools. But mining posed very minimal or no threat to the environment and water bodies at the time.

I am not oblivious of the fact that surface gold, which was mined at the time is, largely, depleted, and that mining today requires some substantial amount of earthmoving before reaching the mineral. But that is no justification for degrading our lands, forests and environment.

Our efforts, which are necessary to clamp down on galamsey, have, sometimes, been interpreted to mean the Government of President Akufo-Addo is against small scale mining. The contrary is rather the case. The commitment of President Akufo-Addo to promoting responsible small scale mining is demonstrated in the reduction of 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 led to over six hundred percent (600%) increment in gold export from the small scale mining sector, since this reduction.

Mr. Chairman apart from the greedy and unscrupulous nation wreckers who destroy our environment due to their personal interests, the drivers of the illegalities in the small scale mining sector include unemployment, lack of blocked out areas for small scale mining, challenges with securing licences and other regulatory permits, and lack of law enforcement.

We are, therefore, implementing policies and measures aimed at addressing these drivers. Under the National Alternative Employment and Livelihood Programme (NAELP), which was launched by President Akufo-Addo in 2021, for example, we are providing alternative sources of income and livelihood to persons engaged in mining. This Programme employs several youths in the production of seedlings and reclamation of degraded mined lands. Currently, reclamation is ongoing in over one thousand hectares (1,000 ha) of degraded lands in Ashanti, Eastern and Western North Regions.

The Apprenticeship, Skills Training and Entrepreneurship module of the Programme is expected to be rolled out later this year, and will provide training for some five thousand (5,000) youth in agriculture, technical, vocational, industrial, and mining skills.

To address the issue of blocked out areas for small scale mining, we are resourcing the Ghana Geological Survey Authority, to undertake more geological investigations and block out more areas for small scale mining. While this is ongoing, we continue to engage large scale mining companies, to release portions of their concessions for small scale mining.

And to ensure that small scale mining is done sustainably and responsibly, we are promoting the Community Mining Scheme, through the strict enforcement of the guidelines in the Small Scale and Community Mining Operational Manual. These Schemes are supported by mercury-free gold katchas, aimed at eliminating the use of mercury in the small scale mining sector, in accordance with our commitment under the Minamata Convention.

Fortunately, the Minerals Commission has made licensing applications easier, by moving them online, so that you can apply for a licence, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and from the comfort of your home or wherever you may be.

With the support of the World Bank, we are, also, implementing the Ghana Landscape Restoration and Small-scale Mining Project (GLRSSMP) to, among others, strengthen integrated natural resources management, promote sustainable small scale mining practices, and restore degraded mined lands.

For those who have vowed to ignore all these measures and continue with the illegalities, we have strengthened the enforcement regime, by increasing the punishment for persons convicted for engaging in illegal mining, while Operation Halt II continues to support our enforcement measures.

Today, on the instructions of the Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, all prosecutions involving illegal mining activities are undertaken by the Office of the Attorney-General. As at the beginning of this month, there were one hundred and nineteen (119) cases, involving some seven hundred and twenty-seven (727) accused persons, pending before the courts for various offences relating to illegal mining, mainly in Eastern, Western, and Ashanti Regions. This excludes the one hundred and eighty-seven (187) people convicted in Eastern Region, last year, and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

These measures have, obviously, yielded some results. But we cannot be content. We cannot rest, while the illegalities persist. We must continue to engage all stakeholders in this sector to come to grips with this age-old canker. This is why I applaud the University of Energy and Natural Resources for instituting this Transformational Dialogue. Platforms like this, which bring together various stakeholders, are necessary for us to pull our efforts together in a common direction.

It was in that spirit that on the instructions of President Akufo-Addo, we held the National and Regional Dialogues on Small Scale Mining. It was in that same spirit that, last week, we partnered with the Graphic Communications Group Limited to organise the Natural Resources Stakeholder Dialogue on the management and utilisation of our natural resources.

This University is, without a shred of doubt, on the right track with these engagements, and we salute you for that. This Dialogue is unique, for among others, it mainstreams the role of academia in small scale mining regulation, as well as issues of human rights. According to the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), unstable relation between small scale miners and higher educational and scientific institutions, as well as a disconnect between Government initiatives and educational institutions are some of the factors militating against efforts at fighting illegal mining.

This Dialogue, which has academia at the fulcrum, is, therefore, very timely and consequential. We must intensify research to support Government's efforts in this area.

I must, also, highly commend this University for introducing several novel programmes aimed at promoting sustainable mining and environmental protection, including Bachelor and Graduate programmes in Sustainable Mining, Urban Mining, Development Minerals Mining, Land Degradation Neutrality, and Sustainable Land Management.

We acknowledge the importance of research and development to everything we do. That is why Government, through the Minerals Development Fund (MDF), continues to support institutions of higher education in mining related research, including the construction of an ultra-modern Multi-purpose Geology Laboratory for the Faculty of Earth Sciences at the University of Ghana, and several other projects at George Grant University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa. Mr. Chairman, my friends, the University of Energy and Natural Resources will get its fair share in due course. I promise you.

I am happy that, this year, you are bringing to the fore matters of human rights in the small scale mining sector. Since the issues of business and human rights took centre stage, a little over two decades ago, most transnational and multinational companies have been making strenuous efforts to incorporate human rights into their business models.

Today, most investors consider such human rights policies before investing in these companies. But this has not been the case for small scale mining companies. And yet, we know that small scale mining impacts a number of human rights, including the rights to life, health, safe environment, water, property, and indeed, development. I am confident, that the experts gathered here, today, will delve into these matters, and come out with proposals for dealing with this issue.

Mr. Chairman, Vice Chancellor, Hon. Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the small scale mining sector is an important sector to our national economy. We can, and we must do it right. This requires a collaborative effort and all hands-on-deck approach.

Research and innovation are very crucial to promote sustainable resources extraction practises, and transforming mined lands into viable lands for agricultural purposes. Institutions of higher learning like yours are, therefore, indispensable in our quest to regulate this sector. We must intensify education on responsible and sustainable mining practices. Government will continue to do its part, but we require the support and commitment of all of us to achieve the desired results.

Let me, once again, commend the reputable University of Energy and Natural Resources for creating this platform for such an engagement. I am convinced that if we pull our efforts together, we can deliver a sustainable, responsible and environmentally-sound small scale mining sector that respects the rights of all actors. It is my hope that arising out of this Dialogue will be practical solutions and a renewed commitment for sustainable small scale mining.

On this note, Mr. Chairman, Vice Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the singular honour to declare this year's Transformational Dialogue on Small-scale Mining under the theme: ***"Sustaining Environmental Security and Human Rights in Small-scale Mining Operations in Ghana"*** duly opened.

I wish you fruitful discussions, and look forward to the outcome of your Dialogue.

I thank you for your attention.