

URGENT QUESTION

RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO AN URGENT QUESTION POSED BY HON. ROBERT WISDOM CUDJOE, MP (PRESTEA HUNI-VALLEY) ON EMERGENCY MEASURES THE MINISTRY HAS PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT SANKOFA GOLD MINE LIMITED, PRESTEA, PAYS THE OVER 27 MONTHS UNPAID SALARIES TO ALL WORKERS WHO ARE OWED FROM 2017 TO 2020

Mr. Speaker, Prestea Sankofa Gold Ltd was established in 1994 as a state-owned gold mining company. The Company, however, run into difficulties and was, eventually, shut down in 1999. Following Government's intervention, the company was revived in 2004, but, again, collapsed in 2016, and operations came to a halt.

Mr. Speaker, Government, under the distinguished leadership of President Akufo-Addo, again, intervened, and in June 2021, the company was revamped. As we speak, the company is in full operation. Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) holds ninety percent (90%) shares in the Company, with Government holding the remaining ten percent (10%) shares as free carried interest, making the company wholly state-owned.

Mr. Speaker, as at June 2021, the company had outstanding salary arrears of forty-nine (49) month due to several months of inactivity. Prior to the resuming of operation, however, the Ministry worked with the majority shareholder of the company, GNPC, and twenty (20) months of the outstanding salaries were paid. Subsequently, the Ministry facilitated an agreement between the Company and its employees, represented by the Mine Workers Union, for the payment of the outstanding salaries, effective July, 2022, which is currently being implemented.

Mr. Speaker, under the Agreement, the Company pays current salaries, as and when they fall due, and pays half of a month's salary of the arrears each month. Thus, every two (2) months, the workers are paid one month of the outstanding salaries. Pursuant to this agreement, additional eight (8) months of the outstanding salaries have been paid, leaving twenty-one (21) months of unpaid salaries.

Mr. Speaker, the Company is paying the outstanding twenty-one (21) months' salary in accordance with the terms of the Agreement reached with the Mine Workers Union on behalf the workers. The Ministry will continue to work with the company to ensure that all the outstanding salaries are paid.

Needless to point out, Mr. Speaker, that these salaries are outstanding because the company collapsed in 2016, and production came to a halt. Thankfully, we have been able to revive operations, and once the company remains in business, all these salaries would be paid. The most important thing for us, as a Ministry, therefore, is to ensure that the Company remains in operation, and continues to provide employment for the teeming youth of Prestea Huni Valley, and the country at large.

Let me assure the Hon. Member for Prestea Huni Valley, and this august House, that Government will continue to work with the management of the company to boost its operations and pay all outstanding debts.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1576

RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO A QUESTION POSED BY HON. MOHAMMED ADAMS SUKPARU, MP (SISSALA WEST) ON PLANS THE MINISTRY HAS PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT ENCROACHMENT ON BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS IN THE COUNTRY BECOME A THING OF THE PAST

Mr. Speaker, the importance of biodiversity to our survival and the survival of planet earth cannot be overemphasised. However, across the globe, biodiversity continues to be under constant threat from human activities. Globally, there are some thirty-six (36) recognised biodiversity hotspots, including the Guinean Forests of West Africa, where the country's biodiversity hotspots, such as Forests Reserves, wetlands, Globally Significant Biodiversity Areas, among others, fall.

Mr. Speaker, the Forestry Commission, under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, is implementing several measures aimed at preventing encroachment on Ghana's biodiversity hotspots, as well as preserving and protecting these areas. These include law enforcement measures, public education, and policy reformation.

The Commission has, for instance, established Rapid Response Teams (RRT) to support Forest Guards and other field staff of the Forestry Commission to effectively protect our forest and wildlife resources. The membership of the Rapid Response Team has been increased from forty-eight (48) in 2021 to one hundred and thirty (130) in 2023. The Team undergoes periodic military training to equip them with the needed skills to combat encroachment and illegalities in Forest Reserves including identified hotspot areas.

The Team, also, arrests, and, with the assistance of the Office of the Attorney-General, prosecutes persons who flout forest and wildlife laws. Some personnel of the Commission have been trained to prosecute forest offences.

The Commission undertakes community engagement, education and sensitisation to educate the public about the essence of biodiversity hotspots and the need to protect them. The Commission has established Community Resources Management Areas (CREMAs) in fringe communities to ensure community involvement in the management and protection of these areas. This system gives communities more rights and access to these areas to promote sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of natural habitats and endangered species.

These measures are supported by traditional methods of preservation of natural resources, such as the creation of sacred grooves and the prohibition of farming and hunting on certain days and in certain areas.

Mr. Speaker, where necessary, demolishing exercises are carried out to ward off encroaches. In the Sakumono Ramsar Site, for instance, which has come under severe attacks in recent years, we have intensified community engagements, undertaken some demolition exercises to protect the core area of the Site, and more structures within the core zone of the Site are earmarked for demolishing. Currently, structures within the core area are being marked, and once completed, all these structures would be demolished.

Mr. Speaker, let me assure this august House of my personal commitment, and that of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to ensure that all biodiversity hotspots in the country, and indeed, all our forest and wildlife resources are effectively protected for current and future generations.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1813

RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO A QUESTION POSED BY HON. ROBERT WISDOM CUDJOE, MP (PRESTEA HUNI-VALLEY) ON EFFECTIVE AND PRAGMATIC MEASURES THE MINISTRY COULD ADOPT TO FLUSH OUT THE INCREASING NUMBER OF FOREIGNERS, WHO ARE STILL OPERATING ILLEGAL MINING IN FOREST RESERVES

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has been implementing several measures to tackle illegal mining in the Forest Reserves of our country, not only by foreigners, but also, by Ghanaians.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, 23rd February, 2023, pursuant to a question posed by the Hon. Member for Gomoa East, Hon. Desmond De-Graft Paitoo, I gave a detailed answer on all the measures that the Ministry has put in place to curb illegal mining in our Forest Reserves, whether by citizens, or by foreigners.

These include regular patrolling of the Forest Reserves by the Forestry Commission, protection and maintenance of internal and external boundaries of Forest Reserves, awareness creation and stakeholder sensitization, decommissioning and demobilisation of equipment used for illegalities in the Forest Reserves, destruction of illegal farms, arrest and prosecution of forest offenders, including foreigners.

I must emphasise, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to illegalities in the Forest Reserves of our country, there is no distinction between nationals and foreigners. The Forestry Commission has been working to cordon off all the Forest Reserves of our country to rid them of all forms of illegalities, and these measures are yielding some results, although we are not out of the woods yet.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources will continue to work with relevant agencies to ensure that the Forest Resources of our country are protected for posterity.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1814

RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO A QUESTION POSED BY HON. ROBERT WISDOM CUDJOE, MP (PRESTEA HUNI-VALLEY) ON THE TOTAL ACREAGE OF FOREST RESERVE CLEARED FOR TREE PLANTING AROUND ATWERE BONDA, WASSA NKIRAN AND PIESO IN THE PRESTEA HUNI VALLEY CONSTITUENCY AND THE EFFECTIVE MEASURES PUT IN PLACE TO NURTURE AND PRESERVE THE PLANTED SEEDLINGS

Mr. Speaker, since 2017, a number of tree planting programmes have been implemented by Government, as part of our aggressive afforestation and reforestation programme to restore our lost forest cover, both in Forest Reserves, and off-reserves. These include the Forest Plantation Strategy, the Modified Taungya System, Youth in Afforestation Programme, Green Ghana Project, Green Streets Project, Forest Investment Programme, among others.

Under the Forest Plantation Strategy, for example, over six hundred and ninety thousand hectares (690,000 ha) of forest were cultivated between 2017 and 2022, through initiatives such as forest plantation, enrichment planting and trees-on-farm.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of tree planting exercises within Forest Reserves, the Ministry does not clear the Forest Reserves to plant trees. What we do is to plant trees in areas of the Forest Reserves that have been degraded.

As part of these national forest restoration efforts, Government partnered with farmers from the Wassa Nkran Community in the Prestea Huni Valley Municipality to undertake tree planting over degraded parts of the Subri River Forest Reserve. A total area of thirty-two point five-five hectares (32.55 hectares) of degraded forest was planted between 2017 and 2018 under the Modified Taungya System.

Mr. Speaker, the breakdown of this restoration exercise is provided in my answer and I want Hansard to capture same.

Forest Restoration in Subri River Forest Reserve with Wassa Nkran Community

COMMUNITY	LOCATION	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	AREA (ha)
Wassa Nkran	Compartment 145	2017	5.77

	Compartment 142 & 145	2018	26.78
Total			32.55

Mr. Speaker, through the same partnership with the Atwereboana Community seventy hectares (70 ha) of degraded forest was planted in the Bonsa River Forest Reserve in 2022, under the same Modified Taungya System. Again, the breakdown of this restoration exercise is provided in my answer, and I want Hansard to capture same

Forest Restoration in Bonsa River Forest Reserve with Atwereboana Community

COMMUNITY	LOCATION	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	AREA (ha)
Atwereboana	Compartment 23	2022	10.00

	Compartment 33 & 34	2022	60.00
Total			70.00

Mr. Speaker the Pieso Community, although close to the Forest Reserve, is yet to be engaged in this forest restoration exercise.

Mr. Speaker, the Modified Taungya System (MTS) involves partnership between Government, through the Forestry Commission, and farmer groups, where farmers are permitted to inter-crop timber trees with food crops. The farmers get full proceeds from the food crops and, also, sign a Benefit Sharing Agreement with Government which guarantees them forty percent (40%) of the proceeds from the timber trees.

Because of its benefit-sharing structure, the farmers undertake to maintain the trees planted under the technical supervision of the Forestry Commission. These include regular weeding and pruning of trees to promote their optimal growth.

Mr. Speaker, the Modified Taungya System has proven to be one of the most effective ways of restoring our degraded Forest Reserves with community involvement, and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, through the Forestry Commission, will continue to engage fringe communities on this programme to restore our degraded landscapes.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1826

RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO A QUESTION POSED BY HON. DR. KWABENA DONKOR, MP (PRU EAST) ON THE PERCENTAGE OF GHANA'S GOLD REFINED IN GHANA AND WHAT OTHER FORMS OF VALUE ADDITION THE MINISTRY IS PROMOTING FOR THE GOLD SECTOR

Mr. Speaker, our country has a long history of gold mining, predating the arrival of the first Europeans on our land. Since the establishment of the first foreign mining company in the country, sometime in 1878, large scale gold mining has consistently been on the rise, becoming the bulwark of our modern economy. Today, we are the leading producer of gold on the continent, with gold production in 2022 reaching almost three point seven million ounces (3.7 million oz).

Mr. Speaker, despite our huge endowment in this natural resource, over the years, we have not been able to establish an internationally recognised gold refinery in the country to refine the volumes of gold we produce.

Mr. Speaker, gold goes through a number of processes before being sold on the international market. The ore, which is mined from the ground, usually, contains a minimum of zero point five to one gram of gold per tonne (0.5 – 1g/t). This ore is taken through several processes such as crushing, milling, mechanical separation and washing to derive a concentrate, with a gold content of about twenty grams per tonne (20g/t). The concentrate is, then, taken through a chemical process to produce a metallurgic gold, which is smelted and cast in a semi-pure gold bars known as dore or bullion, still containing other minerals, such as silver. It is the gold dore which is usually exported from the country, mostly containing gold content of ninety-two to ninety-four percent (92% - 94%).

Mr. Speaker, currently, all our gold is exported in the form of dore or bullion, due to the absence of a certified refinery in the country. It is at this refinery stage that the dore is refined into what is described as fine gold, in the form of “Good Delivery” bars. This is only done by refineries certified by relevant international bodies, such as the London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) and others recognised under the Hallmarking Convention.

There were attempts, sometime in the 1960s, to establish a refinery in Tarkwa, then the hub of gold mining in the country, but these attempts were unsuccessful. Since then, successive Governments showed very little or no interest in the gold refinery industry, until 2005, under President John Agyekum Kufour, when Precious Metals Refinery was licensed to establish a gold refinery in the country. Since then, some fourteen (14) companies have been granted licences to establish a gold refinery, but almost all of them failed to attain an appreciable level of operation. Details of these companies are provided in Appendix I to the answer and I want Hansard to capture same.

Some of the challenges that have hampered the development of these refineries are lack of capital, the absence of a robust downstream industry, and failure to attain LBMA Certification.

Mr. Speaker, since assuming office in 2017, the Government of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo has been working to establish an LBMA certified gold refinery, as well as promote the downstream gold industry.

In 2018, Government, through the Precious Minerals Marketing Company (PMMC), initiated steps, under a Public Private Partnership, to establish a gold refinery with a daily refinery capacity of four hundred kilogrammes (400kg) of gold. This refinery is completed, has gone through a test run and now ready to be commissioned to commence full operations.

We have, already, commenced the processes of securing a London Bullion Marketing Association (LBMA) Certification, to enable us easily export and trade our refined gold on the international market. We have had extensive engagements with Rand Refinery, the only LBMA Good Delivery accredited refiner on the African continent, and one of only five internationally recognised referees by the LBMA, to assist us go through the LBMA certification process. Though the COVID-19 pandemic, somewhat, stalled discussions, we have, since 2021, scaled up these engagements. Mr. Speaker, it is our expectation that these initiatives will yield the necessary results to enable us refine not only gold produced in Ghana, but across the West African sub-region.

On the downstream gold industry, the PMMC's jewellery subsidiary has been very active in producing jewelleries, including other articles of gold namely gold tablets, medals, trophies, among others. Mr. Speaker, I am reliably informed that the Mace in this august House, is a product of PMMC.

The Company continues to engage with other stakeholders within the jewellery industry to promote Ghana's jewellery market, leveraging on the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The plan, going forward, is also to establish a central marketplace for Ghana's gold jewellery and other precious metal articles, similar to the concept of Accra's Art Centre.

Mr. Speaker, just last week, on the sidelines of the China Mining Conference and Exhibition, I, also, paid a working visit to the Shanghai Gold Exchange, the biggest physical gold trading exchange in the world, and one of the largest exchanges, globally, to engage their leadership on working together to promote the development of our downstream gold industry.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that a team from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Minerals Commission have commenced work with a team from the Shanghai Gold Exchange to explore areas of possible cooperation.

On a related matter, I am, also, happy to report that as part of my engagements in China, Ningxia Tianyuan Manganese Industry Group Company Ltd., the parent company of Ghana Manganese Company has committed to establish a refinery in Ghana within one year, to refine the manganese we produce.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of President Akufo-Addo recognises the importance of adding value to the minerals we produce. That is why since 2017, we have been putting together the building blocks to ensure value addition to these minerals, including the establishment, with the help of this august House, of the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC) and the Ghana Integrated Iron and Steel Development Corporation (GIISDEC). Gold being our foremost mineral, we will do everything possible to ensure that we add value to our gold resources, develop the gold downstream sector and increase the contribution of gold to our national economy.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1827

**RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP,
MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO
A QUESTION POSED BY HON. DR. KWABENA DONKOR,
MP (PRU EAST) ON THE KILOMETRES OF EXPLORATORY
DRILLING THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE FOR THE FISCAL
YEARS 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, AND 2022**

Mr. Speaker, exploration is crucial to the mining industry. It is the process of ascertaining the presence or otherwise of minerals in a particular area and the volumes of the mineral that can be mined. Exploratory drilling is, thus, the method used to search for mineral occurrences in rocks by drilling into the ground.

Mr. Speaker, five (5) types of exploratory drilling have been undertaken in our country by large scale mining companies in the fiscal years between 2018 and 2022. They are Auger Drilling, Rotary Air Blast (RAB) Drilling, Reverse Circulation (RC) Drilling, Rotating Control Device (RCD) Drilling, and Diamond Drilling. The type of drilling depends on the type of drilling equipment used.

Together, a total of one thousand, four hundred and thirty-five point four two kilometres (1435.42km) of exploratory drilling have been undertaken by large scale gold mining companies between 2018 and 2022. The breakdown is as follows:

No.	Year	Meterage (km)
1.	2018	67. 07
2.	2019	45.17
3.	2020	307.25
4.	2021	578.70
5.	2022	437.23
	TOTAL	1435.42

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1829

**RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP,
MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO
A QUESTION POSED BY HON. SAMUEL OKUDZETO
ABLAKWA, MP (NORTH TONGU) ON WHETHER THE
SOLE INQUIRER, KWASI ANTO OFORI-ATTA, A
RETIRED JUSTICE OF THE HIGH COURT, HAS
COMPLETED HIS TASK AND WHEN GOVERNMENT WILL
PUBLISH HIS REPORT IF THE INQUIRY HAS BEEN
CONCLUDED**

Mr. Speaker,

Sometime in the middle of March 2022, the attention of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources was drawn to media reports about the demolishing of the Bulgarian Embassy by some private individuals. The Ministry immediately dispatched a team, led by a Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and Member of Parliament for Atwima Nwabiagya North, Hon. Benito Owusu-Bio, MP, to visit the site and ascertain the veracity or otherwise of the report.

Subsequently, on 18th March, 2022, I appointed Mr. Justice Kwasi Anto Ofori-Atta, a highly reputed retired Justice of the High Court, with vast experience in adjudication of land disputes, as Sole Inquirer to inquire into, not only the Bulgarian Embassy matter, but all matters relating to land and diplomatic missions in the country. Specifically, the Sole Inquirer was to:

1. Undertake a full and impartial inquiry into the alleged encroachment and/or demolishing of property on the land being used as the Bulgarian Embassy;
2. Make appropriate recommendations relating to the land being used as the Bulgarian Embassy;
3. Inquire into the nature of interest in any land held or occupied by Diplomatic Missions in Ghana;
4. Inquire into any matter relating to land in which Diplomatic Missions in Ghana have an interest whatsoever; and
5. Make recommendations to Government.

Mr. Speaker, due to the urgency of the Bulgarian Embassy matter, the Sole Inquirer was given seven (7) days, to present his report on that matter, and one month to present his report on the other matters.

Upon commencement of his inquiry, the Sole Inquirer said he found the issues considerably complex and therefore requested for an extension of time to conclude his work, which was granted.

Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, 26th April, 2022, the Sole Inquirer presented his report on the first two terms of reference, which deals with the Bulgarian Embassy. The Sole Inquirer is still working on the third, fourth and fifth terms of reference enumerated above, relating to all other lands in which Diplomatic Missions have interest.

Mr. Speaker, due to the interest generated by the Bulgarian Embassy matter, and in accordance with the highest standards of transparency, on 16th May, 2022, I issued a Press Release, where I published the full Executive Summary of the Sole Inquirer's Report, which contains his investigations, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

As indicated above, the Sole Inquirer is still working on the other terms of reference. A decision on the publication or otherwise of the Report will be made once the work is completed and his Report submitted.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the Hon. Member that we are aware of the complexities involved in these matters, which border on Ghana's international relations with other countries, and the Ministry is fully committed to working with all stakeholders to maintain our cordial relations with the international community, in accordance with articles 40 and 73 of our national Constitution.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1869

RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO A QUESTION POSED BY HON. KWASI OWUSU AFRIFA- MENSA, MP (AMASAMAN) ON WHY POTENTIAL LANDOWNERS WHO PURCHASE/LEASE LAND FOR BUILDING PURPOSES AT HEBRON, MEDIE, SAMSAM, MPEHOASEM, KUNTUNSE. ETC., IN THE AMASAMAN CONSTITUENCY OF THE GREATER ACCRA REGION HAVE TO GO TO EASTERN REGION FOR LAND REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Mr. Speaker, the issue of regional boundaries, particularly between the Eastern Region and the Greater Accra Region, which was originally part of the Eastern Region, continues to pose some challenges, not only for land administration, but even for the political administration of the country. The numerous cases that the Supreme Court had to resolve on such boundary issues, including **Matekole & Azago Kwesitsu I v Electoral Commission and Attorney-General (NO. 2) [2012] 1 SCGLR 244; Obronu v Attorney-General [2015-2016] 1 SCGLR 364;** and **Akuse Amedeka Citizens Association v Attorney-General and Electoral Commission [2015-2016] 1 SCGLR 372,** are clear manifestation of such challenges.

As Atuguba JSC explained in the Mate Kole Case (supra),

It is true that the second Schedule to [the Greater-Accra Regional Act, 1982] P.N.D.C.L. 26 contains a "Statutory Description of the Greater Accra Region" and some towns or villages are depicted on the map within the area.... However, as Africans, and Ghanaians, in particular, we know that maps often depict the major towns or villages and therefore it will be perilous to apply the maxim expressio unius est exclusio alterius in respect of all other villages or areas alleged to be part of a certain territory or geographical area because they are not depicted on a map."

Over the years, therefore, some towns and villages have appeared to be falling within either the Greater Accra or the Eastern Region, depending on the interpretation given to these maps. This, was, invariably, leading to duplicity of registration between the Greater Accra and Eastern Regions, thereby compromising the integrity of land administration.

To mitigate the risk in duplicity of registration in those areas arising from the unclear nature of the boundaries, the Lands Commission, established registration boundaries between these two regions. This was necessary to ensure that lands within certain areas were registered in only one region, to enable us track transactions relating to those lands.

By the Lands Commission's boundaries, Hebron and Medie fall within the Eastern Region, while Samsam, Mpehoasem and Kuntunse fall within the Greater Accra Region. Accordingly, lands within Hebron and Medie are to be registered in the Eastern Region while lands falling within Samsam, Mpehoasem, and Kuntunse are to be registered in the Greater Accra Region.

Mr. Speaker, the development of these communities along the boundaries have resulted in some of the communities straddling the boundary lines. Again, like the Supreme Court observed, the boundaries of these border communities, while they may be clear on the map, are not that clear on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, this issue is not peculiar to the Amasaman Constituency, but affects other border towns between the Greater Accra, Eastern and Central Regions. The Lands Commission has, therefore, constituted a Committee to examine all these issues and make recommendations to Government. Once the Committee is done with its work, the Ministry will work with all stakeholders to find a lasting solution to these matters.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1872

RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO A QUESTION POSED BY HON. ABLA DZIFA GOMASHIE, MP (KETU SOUTH) ON MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO PROTECT WETLANDS AND LAGOONS IN THE KETU SOUTH MUNICIPALITY

Mr. Speaker, wetlands and lagoons that have been designated as Wetlands of International Importance, pursuant to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, also known as the Ramsar Convention, are protected by the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission.

There are, currently, six designated wetlands of international importance, or Ramsar sites, including the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar site in the Volta Region, which covers a total area of about One Hundred and Twenty-Seven Thousand, Seven Hundred and Eighty Hectares (127,780 ha). Wetlands and lagoons within the Ketu South Municipality form part of this Ramsar Site.

Mr. Speaker, on 26th July, 2023, pursuant to a question posed by the Hon. Member for Sissala West, Hon. Mohammed Adams Sukparu, on measures being taken to protect Ramsar Sites in the country, I gave a comprehensive answer on several measures being undertaken to protect all the six (6) Ramsar sites in the country, including law enforcement mechanisms, the use of traditional and community sanctions, stakeholder engagements, education and awareness creation, research and monitoring, ecosystem restoration, tourism promotion and the use of Community Resources Management Areas (CREMA), where feasible.

Specifically, in respect of the Keta Lagoon Ramsar Site, I stated as follows:

***“In the Keta Lagoon Ramsar Site, for example, a total of fifty-seven hectares (57 ha) of degraded mangrove areas have been restored, and six hectares of community woodlots have been established, in partnership with Arocha Ghana, Kasa Initiative, and Sea Solutions.*”**

Some additional fifteen (15) hectares of degraded mangroves, and six hectares of community woodlot, would be restored and established, respectively, by the end of this year.

Schools and communities in the catchment area are constantly engaged, and five informant networks have been established to prevent the killing of marine turtles. Four Community Resources Management Areas (CREMAs) have been established at Avu-Lagoon, Anlo-West (now Angor), and Galo-Sota Galotse (now Dusornu), with others due to come on stream to support these measures."

Mr. Speaker, I wish to reiterate that wetlands are crucial to environmental protection, and constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value. The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources will, therefore, continue to adopt measures that ensure the protection, preservation and effective management of all Ramsar Sites in the country.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION *1873

**RESPONSE FROM HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP,
MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, TO
A QUESTION POSED BY HON. ABLA DZIFA GOMASHIE,
MP (KETU SOUTH) ON THE CORPORATE SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY CAPTURED IN THE CONTRACT OF
SEVEN SEAS COMPANY IN THE KETU SOUTH
CONSTITUENCY AND IF SAME HAS BEEN EXECUTED**

Mr. Speaker, Seven Seas Salt Limited, formerly Kensington Industries Limited, was granted a fifteen-year Restricted Mining Lease on 29th December, 2011, over an area of the Keta Lagoon measuring approximately Six Thousand and four, point four eight acres (6,004.48 acres), to expire on 28th December, 2026. This Mining Lease does not contain any corporate social responsibility clauses.

Mr. Speaker, typically, Mining Leases do not contain any corporate social responsibility clauses. Corporate Social Responsibility agreements are usually the subject-matter of separate agreements entered between the mining companies and host communities.

For example, on 19th January, 2021, Seven Seas Salt Limited entered into separate Community Compensation Agreements with the Somey Traditional Authority, Adafienu Community, Xedzranawo Community, and the Tettekope Community. These agreements include provisions for the payment of adequate compensation, and the provision corporate social responsibility projects for these communities, such as the provision of employment for members of the communities, the provision of humanitarian assistance in times of natural disasters, and provision of health, sporting, educational and security facilities for the communities.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to these agreements, a number of Projects have been undertaken by the Company in these communities. They include the construction of roads, repair of existing roads, installation of water tanks and pipes for the supply of water, construction of fish ponds, provision of laptops, printers, stationery, textbooks, and educational materials, and the provision of direct financial support to the communities.

Mr. Speaker, a complete list of all the corporate social responsibility projects undertaken by the Company since 2011 is attached to this answer as Appendix II, and I want Hansard to capture them fully. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.