

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, AT THE MINING MINISTERS' FORUM AT THE 25TH CHINA MINING CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION, HELD IN TIANJIN, CHINA, ON THURSDAY, 26TH OCTOBER, 2023

Colleague Ministers of State;

Ghana's Ambassador to China;

Members of Ghana's Parliament;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Representatives of Governments;

Representatives from the Private Sector;

Captains of the Mining Industry;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I bring you warm greetings from the President of the Republic of Ghana, H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, an avowed believer in public private partnership, and under whose outstanding leadership Ghana has continued to strengthen her relations with the Peoples' Republic of China.

It is that bond of friendship that saw President Akufo-Addo pay a State visit to China in 2018, which was reciprocated with the visit of China's then Vice Prime Minister, H.E. Sun Chunlan, who, incidentally, served as the Communist Party's Secretary for this Tianjin Municipality. Today, Ghana – China relations is seen as the model of China – Africa cooperation, with bilateral trade between the two countries, consistently, increasing, even in the midst of the pandemic.

Indeed, China was one of the first countries to recognise the independence of Ghana in 1957, and has maintained a strong bond of friendship since then. This friendship has transcended into trade and investment, as well as people to people relationship. China remains Ghana's biggest trading partner, with trade value reaching seven point four six billion US dollars (US\$7.46 billion) in 2019, the largest investor in Ghana by registered projects, and a great ally in economic, financial and infrastructural development. In 2019 alone, prior to the pandemic, over ten thousand five hundred (10,500) Chinese entered Ghana, with an estimated twenty-two thousand (22,000) Ghanaians visiting China that same year. Clearly, we have a lot in common, which we can leverage for our mutual benefit.

On behalf of the delegation from Ghana, which includes both Government officials and businessmen from the private sector, I want to express our sincerest gratitude to the Minister for Natural Resources of China, Hon. Wang Guanguah, for the invitation to participate in this year's China Mining Conference and Exhibition, which, over the past two and half decades, has, undoubtedly, become one of the foremost gatherings of experts, policymakers and industry players in the mining sector. I, also, want to thank the organisers of this event, the China Mining Association, and all their partners, for their vision and foresight in putting together this Conference, and for the opportunity to speak at this session.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme chosen for this twenty-fifth (25th) edition of the Conference, "***Innovation Promotes High-Quality Development of Mining***," aligns with the vision of our President, 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 would be centred. Fortunately for us, we are endowed with large deposits of several minerals, and mining has been part of the lives of our forebears from the very beginning.

It is, therefore, not surprising that prior to our independence in 1957, our country was referred to as the Gold Coast, a name adopted by the first Europeans who settled on our land, due to the country's rich natural endowment in gold. And for years, the believe was that gold was found only at the coastal and forest zones of the country. Today, that conventional wisdom has been jettisoned. With the aid of technology and innovation, we have discovered gold in almost every part of our country, including the northmost savannah areas.

As I speak, Shandong Gold Group, through its local subsidiary, Cardinal Namdini, is engaged in large scale mining in the northern part of my country, and it's expected to become the third largest mine in the country, once production starts in the last quarter of next year. There are other companies from other countries engaged in large scale mining in other parts of the north, as well as a host of small scale miners.

Till date, gold remains our main mineral, accounting for more than ninety percent (90%) of our gross mineral revenues. Ghana is, currently the leading producer of gold on the African continent.

But apart from gold, Ghana is endowed with several other minerals, including diamonds, and some of the critical minerals required for the green energy transition, such as lithium, bauxite, iron ore, graphite and manganese. There are, also, deposits of base metals like copper, zinc, nickel, chrome and lead, as well as industrial minerals, such as sand, gravel, granites and salt.

All these minerals, in their natural state, are by our national Constitution, vested in the President for the Republic, on behalf of, and in trust for the people of Ghana. No individual, thus, owns any mineral in its natural state, in the country, and no one can grant a concession for the exploitation of our mineral resource apart from the Government. This gives the Government of Ghana a greater authority over the exploitation, management and use of our natural resources. We do this in close partnership with the private sector, by creating a conducive environment for investment and businesses to thrive.

Currently, there are some sixteen (16) large scale mining operations in the country, with fourteen (14) of them producing gold, and the other two producing manganese and bauxite, with a lithium mine soon to commence operation, subject to parliamentary ratification.

These mines are operated by different companies, including companies with significant Chinese interest, such as Shandong Gold Group's Cardinal Namdini, Chifeng Jilong Gold Group's Golden Star Resources, and Ningxia Tianyuan Manganese Industry Group.

These companies are supported by some two hundred and thirty-five (235) companies offering engineering and mine support services such as drilling, contract mining and assaying services.

Our diamonds are, largely, produced from small scale mining, but, with the right investment, technology and innovation, has a huge potential for viable large-scale operations. Industrial minerals that anchor the infrastructural development of the country are also being exploited, with Clay, Feldspar, Limestone, Salt, Granites, Sand and Kaolin being mined across the nation by over one hundred and ten (110) licensed quarry operations.

There are some five hundred (500) exploration projects, mainly targeted at gold, lithium, copper and cobalt. Recent geological investigations have also indicated viable prospects for iron ore, nickel, zinc, chromium, lead and columbite-tantalite, and we continue to pursue the right technology and innovation for the exploitation of these minerals.

The priority of the Government of Ghana continues to be the translation of these volumes of mineral production into wealth to benefit all stakeholders, equitably, including the larger populace as optimally as possible. Government is, therefore, mindful of the need to implement mining-friendly policies to sustain these achievements while ensuring environmental sustainability, and protecting the interest of citizens and investors alike.

Fortunately, and significantly, in Ghana, the rule of law is the norm and not the exception. It is the pivot around which our governance architecture revolves. With a stable governance system, spanning over thirty (30) years, investors are assured of the protection of their rights.

Anchored on this business-friendly environment, the Government of Ghana continues to adopt policies to improve transparency in the industry, beneficiation and value addition, upstream and side-stream linkages, and to ensure a win-win situation for both investors and host country.

Our policy and legislative reforms are geared towards efficient exploitation, value addition, environmental protection, local content and local participation, and effective utilisation of our mineral resources for the benefit of Ghanaians and investors alike.

These include generation of adequate geo-scientific data to promote investment into large scale and small scale mining, streamlining of the licensing regime to make the acquisition of licences easier and faster, enhancing environmental stewardship in the exploitation and use of minerals, formalisation of the small scale mining sector, and diversification of our mineral production base; all these done within a framework of enhanced compliance and integrity.

In line with our objective to promote beneficiation and value addition through public private partnership, we have, through Acts of Parliament, established the Ghana Integrated Aluminium Development Corporation (GIADEC), and the Ghana Integrated Iron and Steel Development Corporation (GIISDEC), to promote and develop in our country, integrated aluminium and iron and steel industries, respectively.

There is an estimated bauxite resource base of nine hundred million metric tonnes (900,000,000Mt) in Ghana, with the potential to produce in excess of ten million metric tonnes (10,000,000Mt) per annum. Unfortunately, with only one bauxite mine operated by the Ghana Bauxite Company, which is a joint venture between the Government of Ghana and a Ghanaian investor, we are producing just a little over one million metric tonnes per year. Indeed, the Ghana Bauxite Company, with the right partnership and investment, can produce in excess of five million metric tonnes (5,000,000Mt), annually.

GIADEC, the statutory corporation responsible for the promotion and development of the integrated aluminium industry in the country, is engaging private sector investors for bauxite mining and refining into alumina, as well as a strategic partner for the second largest smelter in sub-Saharan Africa, the Volta Aluminium Company Ltd (VALCO), located at our industrial hub of Tema, to modernise and expand its operations to feed the downstream aluminium industry.

GIISDEC, on the other hand, is engaging investors for the exploitation of our over one point five (1.5) billion tonnes of iron ore, with an average grade of forty percent (40%) iron oxide, to build an integrated iron and steel industry in-country. With global automotive giants such as, the Chinese state-owned Sinotruk, Toyota, Nissan, Volkswagen, and Suzuki, all established in Ghana, the iron and steel industry presents a huge investment opportunity to feed Ghana's automotive industry.

We have, also, developed a policy framework for the exploitation, management and use of our green minerals, particularly lithium, to generate value added benefits along the full value chain, create linkages with other sectors of the economy, and contribute to halting climate change and its devastating consequences on the lives and livelihoods of our peoples. Just last week, I signed, on behalf of Government, a contract with a large scale mining company, to commence construction, subject to parliamentary ratification, for the production of lithium. Our objective is that, as much as possible, we retain a substantial amount of value of this new mineral in our country.

With China's experience in lithium mining and processing, as well as the production of batteries, we are willing to partner with Chinese companies to contribute to the global energy transition, while ensuring optimal benefit for our people and investors.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, our overarching goal, is to use mining as a catalyst for sustainable development, through optimisation of upstream and side-stream linkages, as a basis for fast-tracking industrial transformation across the various sectors of the economy. Consequently, we have established, by an Act of Parliament, a Mineral Income Investment Fund (MIIF), to manage and maximise the value of mineral income accruing to the Ghanaian State, and to professionally invest in mining and related operations. MIIF has already made substantial investment in gold and lithium operations, and is working on investments in bauxite and iron ore. The Fund welcomes partners for investment across the value chain of the mining industry in Ghana.

There are, also, enormous opportunities in mine support services, including contract mining, drilling and blasting, as well as equipment supply. Thankfully, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is creating a single market for such businesses within the continent, and as host of the AfCFTA Secretariat, investors can use Ghana as a launch-pad to reach the rest of the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the mining sector in Ghana remains huge, and with a strong political stability, anchored on a vibrant governance culture, the sector is conducive for investment. The Government of Ghana continues to engage industry players and other resource-rich countries to build the right and strategic partnerships, make new discoveries and innovations through research and development, and ensure that the industry contributes meaningfully to sustainable development. We do all these in an atmosphere of transparency and in accord with the highest standards of integrity.

Let me assure the investor community in the Peoples' Republic of China of ease of doing business in Ghana, and unhindered access to geological information, good mining governance institutions, and highly skilled mining personnel. These have contributed to Ghana becoming a leading mining enclave in Africa, and I invite you to take advantage of these opportunities. Ours is an exciting journey and future. Stable, poised, transparent, democratic, and welcoming, Ghana is one of, if not the most, attractive investment destination in Africa. We call on you to join us on this obviously thrilling march into the future.

I thank you for your attention.