



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

MINISTRY
OF
LANDS AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

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PRESS RELEASE

**RE: FOREST INVASION: LAND MINISTER'S HALF TRUTH TO
PARLIAMENT AND THE CONTRADICTIONS FUELING MINING IN
GHANA'S FOREST RESERVES**

The attention of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has been drawn to a publication by the Fourth Estate with the above headline in respect of an answer given by the Hon. Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Hon. Samuel A. Jinapor, to a question posed to him in Parliament. The said publication contains a lot of falsehoods and misinformation.

Given the respect and the high regard the Hon. Minister, who is, also, a Member of Parliament, has for the august House of Parliament, the Ministry finds the allegations that the Hon. Minister was not being truthful to Parliament as very serious and rather unfortunate. The Ministry, therefore, deems it necessary to set the records straight as follows:

1. Where a mining operation falls within a Forest Reserve, the holder of the mineral right requires a Forest Entry Permit from the Forestry Commission, in addition to any other permit required by law, including an Environmental Permit issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and an Operating Permit issued by the Minerals Commission.
2. On 23rd February, 2023, the Member of Parliament for Sissala West, Hon. Mohammed Adams Sukparu, posed the following question to the Hon. Minister in Parliament: "***how many companies have been given permit to mine in forest reserves from the year 2017 to 2022.***"

3. Although the question did not specify the specific permit, the question was understood to be referring to Forest Entry Permits, which are granted by the Forestry Commission, and agency under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, before any activity can be carried out in the Forest Reserve.
4. The Minister's answer, as captured in the Hansard of 23rd February, 2023 was specific that "***since 2017, a total of six (6) Forest Entry Permits have been issued for mining in Forest Reserves.***"
5. Although the questioner did not ask for the names of the companies, the Hon. Minister, in the spirit of transparency, named all the companies that have been issued with Forest Entry Permits and the dates they were issued.
6. The Hon. Minister then added that "***out of these six (6), only Chirano Gold Mines and Koantwi Mining Co. Ltd are actually involved in mining. The others are still working on other permits and/or authorisations required to commence their operations.***" This is a fact as per records from the Minerals Commission.
7. The allegation contained in the Report by the Fourth Estate that Koantwi Mining Company Ltd. did not have an Environmental Permit is totally false.
8. Koantwi Co. Ltd was granted a Mining Lease over an area of the Anhwiaso East Forest Reserve at Merewa on 22nd September, 2020 for a term of twelve (12) years.
9. The Lease was subsequently ratified by Parliament on 22nd December, 2020.

10. Subsequent to the grant of the Mining Lease and its ratification by Parliament, on 18th May, 2022, Koantwi Mining Company Ltd applied for a Forest Entry Permit to enter the Forest for the purposes of undertaking its mining operation.
11. In support of the said application, Koantwi Mining Company submitted an **Environmental Permit issued by EPA on 22nd April, 2022 with Permit Number EPA/EIA/576** and an Operating Permit issued by the Minerals Commission on 9th May, 2022. EPA has confirmed issuing this Environmental Permit on 9th May, 2022 for a term of eighteen (18) months.
12. It was based on these that the Forestry Commission issued a Forest Entry Permit to Koantwi Mining Company Ltd. The allegation that Koantwi Mining Company Ltd did not have an Environmental Permit at the time the Minister answered the question in Parliament on 23rd February, 2023, is, therefore, palpably false.
13. For the avoidance of doubt, Koantwi Mining Company Ltd. obtained a Mining Lease, an Environmental Permit, an Operating Permit and a Forest Entry Permit, all before the entry into force of the Environmental Protection (Mining in Forest Reserves) Regulations, 2022 (L.I. 2462), and all were valid at the time the Hon. Minister answered the question in Parliament.
14. The above Lease, together with the Environmental Permit, Operating Permit and Forest Entry Permit should not be confused with any other Mining Lease Koantwi Mining Company Ltd may have, as the Company was, at the time of the Minister's answer, not operating under any Lease other than the Lease granted in 2020 and ratified by Parliament. Indeed, Koantwi Mining Company Ltd. had not, at the time the Minister was speaking in Parliament, applied for any other Forest Entry Permit except the Forest Entry Permit issued for the 2020 Mining Lease.

15. It is clear from the above that the Minister was very truthful to Parliament, and gave the House all the facts relating to Forest Entry Permits issued between 2017 and 2022.
16. It is, also, false that the Minister said in Parliament that ***"mining in forest reserves was prohibited except under exceptional circumstance."*** What the Minister said, as captured in Hansard is that ***"As part of measures to protect these Forest Reserves, we have, since April 2021, suspended all reconnaissance, prospecting and/or exploration activities in Forest Reserves, except in exceptional circumstances."***
17. What has been prohibited, except under exceptional circumstances, are reconnaissance, prospecting and/or exploration, and not mining itself.
18. It is public knowledge that mining has, always, been permitted in Forest Reserves, and that companies such as Newmont Golden Ridge Ltd, Anglogold Ashanti (Iduapriem) Ltd., Ghana Bauxite Company Ltd, Golden Star (Wassa) Ltd, Ghana Manganese Company Ltd., and Chirano Gold Mines Ltd. have all been mining in forest reserves for years, with Ghana Manganese Company Ltd.'s operations dating as far back as to 1916, while Ghana Bauxite Company's operations dates back to the 1940s.
19. The suspension of reconnaissance, prospecting and/or exploration in Forest Reserves, except in exceptional circumstances, formed part of measures adopted to clamp down on illegal mining in Forest Reserves.
20. While there still exists some challenges, this suspension, together with several other measures put in place by the Ministry have contributed to the protection of our Forest Reserves, with Ghana becoming one of the few countries, globally, to record a reduction in the rate of forest loss, last year.

21. It is, again, false, that five (5) companies were granted Mining Leases in Forest Reserves between 1992 and 2016 while ten (10) companies have been granted Mining Leases in Forest Reserves between 2022 and 2023.
22. Records from the Minerals Commission show that several Companies were granted Mining Leases between 1992 and 2016, including:
- a. Golden Star (Wassa) Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 17th September, 1992 over portions of the Subri River Forest Reserve;
 - b. Ghana Bauxite Company Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 10th January, 1997 over portions of Afao Hills Forest Reserve;
 - c. Mensin Gold Bibiani Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 19th May, 1997 over portions of the Tano Suraw Extension Forest Reserve;
 - d. Savannah Cement Co. Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 26th June, 2000 over portions of the Yakombo Forest Reserve;
 - e. Ghana Manganese Company Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 20th August, 2001, over portions of the Bonda River, Nueng North and Nueng South Forest Reserves;
 - f. Chirano Gold Mines Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 8th April, 2004 over portions of the Tano Suraw and Tano Suraw Extension Forest Reserves;
 - g. Newmont Golden Ridge Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 19th January, 2010 over portions of the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve;
 - h. Gem Global Ventures Ltd.'s Mining Lease dated 16th May, 2016 over portions of the Oppon Mansi Forest Reserve;

- i. FGR Bogoso Prestea Limited's Mining Lease dated 17th August, 2016 over portions of the Oppon Mansi Forest Reserve; and
 - j. Gye Nyame Mining Ltd's Mining Lease dated 30th December, 2016 over portions of the Fure River Forest Reserve;
23. Some of these Mining Leases expired after 2016, and were subsequently renewed in accordance with the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703) and its Regulations.
24. The Ministry welcomes the interest of the public, and particularly the media, in the fight against illegal mining, and will continue to count on their support to come to grips with this matter. In so doing, however, the Ministry urges all to be circumspect, cross-check facts and report accurately.
25. The Ministry wishes to assure the people of Ghana of its unwavering commitment to the fight against illegal mining and the protection of our Forest Reserves, and doing so with the highest standards of integrity, transparency and candour, in the public interest.

END

ISSUED BY:

**THE PUBLIC RELATIONS UNIT
MINISTRY OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES**