



MOTTO:
**TO THE EARTH
FOR ITS WEALTH
AND PRESERVATION**

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**Press Release
For Immediate Release
To All Media Houses**

The Ghana Institute of Geoscientists urges an immediate temporary halt to all small-scale mining activities in water bodies, forest reserves, and biodiversity sensitive areas. This initiative aims to ensure strategic alignment with best practices and uphold statues and standards for environmental protection and salvage the remnants.

Ghana is blessed with abundant mineral resources that have been developed and exploited for decades. Historically, some mining operations have continued to the point of depletion, leading to mine closures and subsequent reclamations, and near restorations to original setting. These activities are governed by key legal/legislative frameworks such as the Minerals & Mining Law (Act 703 of 2006), environmental permits from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), water usage rights from the Water Resources Commission, protection of the forest by the Forestry Commission and local operating permits from respective jurisdictions. These regulations are designed to promote responsible mining with minimal environmental impact, especially in sensitive areas such as water bodies, forests cover, and biodiversity sensitive zones and protection of surface right holders.

Gold remains the primary mineral resource at the center of environmental infractions associated with mining activities. Public concern has risen sharply over the widespread degradation of rivers, streams, and forest reserves. The health of vital water bodies is threatened, not due to scarcity, but as a result of an almost irreversible damage, which could take decades to rectify—if at all. Ghana now stands at a critical juncture, where urgent action is needed to halt further destruction of our water bodies and forests reserves.

The Ghana Institute of Geoscientists (GhIG) has observed the continued and alarming destruction of the nation's forest reserves, rivers and their headwaters which are vital sources of life. Water bodies have been polluted and stripped of their portability, potentiality for large scale treatment for the water supply chain and aquatic life lost. The destruction of forest cover has resulted in the loss of rare plant species, some of which may never return due to the complex ecological conditions required for their growth. The above violations are day by day increasing our ground water vulnerabilities which poses dire consequences; denying the right of future generations to determine their own fate.

From our desk, current small-scale mining activities deviant from the law can be categorized into three groups: "illegal and irresponsible", "legal but irresponsible", and "legal and responsible". Unfortunately, the dismal degradation challenges facing the country are exacerbated by:

1. A lack of political will to address the issue, further complicated by political interference and influence from high-ranking officials in addition to short-term political gain.
2. The compromise of traditional rulers and local authorities due to financial incentives from mining interests.
3. lack of professional expertise in mining practices, which is a precise science that requires strict adherence to standards to avoid or minimize

- 4 Inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of state institutions such as the Minerals Commission, EPA, Water Resources Commission, and Regional/District Assemblies in enforcing laws and regulations.
- 5 Bribery and corruption which is widespread within the society including the security services and other state institutions which allow illegal mining activities to continue unchecked.
- 6 Political interferences and influences from high-ranking officials.

In light of these challenges, the GhIG propose the following strategic steps to be taken by government and across the corridors of power to ensure sustainable and responsible mining practices:

1. All small-scale mining in forest reserves and in rivers, streams and water bodies should be banned forthwith and permanently as prescribed by law. Anyone found mining in these places should be arrested and prosecuted through a fast-track mining and environmental court. All mining equipment found in these areas should be seized and confiscated to the State pool of machinery.
2. All small-scale mining taking place less than 100 m from rivers, streams and water bodies should be banned forthwith and permanently as prescribed by law. Any mining equipment found in these areas seized and confiscated to the State and any person or group of persons arrested and prosecuted by the state.

Additionally, a temporary six-month ban should be imposed on all small-scale gold mining activities outside forest reserves, water bodies; and outside the 100 m distance to water bodies to reset the system and implement necessary reforms which includes but not limited to the following:

3. All licensed small-scale mining operations must include a professional geoscientist on their team including community mining (CM). Both the business owner and the geoscientist should be required to sign-off on all activities, ensuring compliance with best practices.
4. A joint monitoring and evaluation team should be formed, comprising representatives from the Minerals Commission, EPA, and the District Security Committee.
5. Mining activities must be co-signed by both the business owner and a registered professional geoscientist, who will be held legally accountable for any environmental infractions, particularly those leading to pollution.

By implementing these measures, we can restore the integrity of Ghana's small-scale mining industry, protect critical water bodies and forest reserves, and streamline the licensing process to be fast and easily accessible, which is often delayed at the ministerial level. Addressing these delays will help prevent unauthorized mining activities from occurring in the interim, ensuring that only legitimate operations are carried out.

The Ghana Institute of Geoscientists (GhIG)
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