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## **INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IAIA) GHANA**

### **PRESS STATEMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
TO ALL MEDIA HOUSES

#### **THE FIGHT AGAINST GALAMSEY: SHORT-MEDIUM TERM MEASURES NEEDED TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES**

The Ghana Affiliate of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is deeply concerned by the continued degradation of our environment due to illegal artisanal small-scale gold mining, popularly known as galamsey.

Despite various promises and interventions by the government, galamsey remains rampant, destroying our forests, polluting our water bodies, and jeopardizing the livelihoods of thousands of Ghanaians. The environmental damage caused by this illegal activity threatens not only our ecosystems but also our national security and economic development.

It is troubling that despite the alarming rate of deforestation, soil degradation, and mercury contamination of rivers, the government's actions have been inadequate in addressing these issues. We condemn this inadequacy and call on President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and all well-meaning Ghanaians to take immediate and decisive action to protect the country from irreversible environmental damage.

Despite the President ordering the deployment of police and military forces to crack down on illegal small-scale mining due to growing calls for action, we propose several immediate short to medium term measures. These must be implemented without delay to effectively address this escalating issue and prevent further environmental degradation. At the same time, these measures will help lay the groundwork for long-term solutions that promote sustainable mining practices:

#### **1. Institutional Strengthening and Community Engagement**

Tackling the galamsey problem requires the active engagement of societal institutions, including religious and community leaders. Churches and mosques must play a leading role in educating their congregations on the dangers of illegal mining and advocating against participation in it. Faith-based organizations have significant influence and can mobilize communities to resist galamsey activities. Nationwide educational campaigns led by religious leaders can raise awareness about the moral and environmental dangers of illegal mining, utilizing sermons, public forums, and educational materials. Furthermore, Traditional Authorities must be actively involved in the mining licensing process. Their influence at the community level is vital to ensuring that

local populations benefit from legitimate mining activities while minimizing environmental harm. Chiefs and community leaders should be empowered to participate in licensing decisions and support the enforcement of anti-galamsey measures.

## **2. Nationwide Moratorium on Small-Scale Mining**

A nationwide moratorium on small-scale mining is crucial and must be strictly enforced to cover both legal and illegal mining activities across the country. This temporary suspension will provide the necessary time for a comprehensive environmental assessment and the initiation of restoration efforts in affected areas. During this moratorium, all mining activities, particularly those in environmentally sensitive zones, must be halted. The goal is to prevent further environmental degradation and assess the current conditions of impacted regions. Law enforcement agencies will be deployed to ensure compliance, with special focus on protecting riparian buffer zones, water bodies, and regions with significant biodiversity.

## **3. Designation and Enforcement of No-Go Areas for Mining**

As part of this moratorium, the government must also designate and legally enforce No-Go Areas for mining, particularly in riparian zones and ecologically sensitive regions, including forest reserves. These areas should be permanently protected from all forms of mining activity to safeguard Ghana's critical ecosystems. This policy should be swiftly aligned with the Environmental Assessment Regulations, LI 1652 regulations to ensure immediate enforcement. Violators should face strict penalties, including imprisonment and heavy fines, to deter illegal activities. The government must also consider repealing Environmental Protection (Mining in Forest Reserves) Regulations, LI 2462. The overarching objective is to protect the country's vital water bodies and biodiversity from further damage caused by unregulated mining.

## **4. Confiscation of Galamsey Sites and Lands**

To serve as a major deterrent to illegal mining, the government must adopt a policy of seizing and confiscating all proven galamsey sites. Once seized, these lands should be transferred to the state and managed by the respective Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), with legal titles assigned for state control. Confiscated lands should then be rehabilitated and converted into reforestation projects, aiming to restore damaged ecosystems and prevent further environmental harm. MMDAs will be held accountable for managing these lands and overseeing reforestation efforts, reporting progress directly to the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization and Rural Development, which will then update Parliament.

To facilitate this process, Parliament should enact urgent legislation enabling the confiscation of galamsey lands and transferring them to MMDAs for restoration and reforestation purposes. Additionally, the law should mandate that MMDAs develop and maintain reforestation projects on these lands. Parliamentary oversight will be crucial in ensuring that these lands are properly managed and that rehabilitation projects are effectively implemented.

## **5. Regulation of Galamsey Equipment**

In addition to the confiscation of lands used for illegal mining activities, it is imperative to control the flow of mining equipment that facilitates these operations. The manufacture, sale, and importation of specific small-scale mining equipment, such as *Changfang* machines and other devices used predominantly in illegal mining, should be strictly prohibited.

The government must implement stringent regulations on equipment entering mining regions. This includes not only the banning of specific machinery but also the establishment of a robust monitoring system to track the movement of heavy machinery into mining areas. Dealers and suppliers of mining equipment should be licensed and held accountable for the distribution of these tools, ensuring that they are only sold to legally authorized miners.

Severe penalties should be imposed on those involved in the illegal production or distribution of such equipment. Government agencies must collaborate, using technology like drone surveillance and tracking systems, to ensure compliance and prevent galamsey operations from expanding.

## **6. Galamsey Condemnation Declarations**

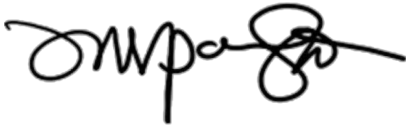
All political parties in Ghana must issue a clear, written declaration condemning galamsey and outlining its dangers. These declarations should be disseminated to party leaders and members and read aloud at the start and end of every political rally or campaign event. Media houses should be required to publish these declarations from each party at least twice a week to raise public awareness. Additionally, the National Media Commission must take responsibility for monitoring the adherence of political parties and media outlets in publishing these galamsey condemnation declarations to ensure consistent messaging and commitment to combat this illegal activity.

The galamsey crisis is not just an environmental disaster; it is a moral, economic, and political challenge that strikes at the heart of our communities, governance, and national prosperity. It undermines livelihoods, depletes national resources, perpetuates inequality, and fosters corruption. Addressing this crisis requires more than just environmental restoration; it demands ethical leadership, inclusive economic policies, and strong political will to enforce laws and dismantle corrupt networks.

Implementing the short-term measures outlined is a critical first step in laying the groundwork for more sustainable, long-term solutions. However, these efforts will only succeed with unwavering political will, the active involvement of local communities, and the support of religious and traditional leaders. Immediate and decisive action is necessary to protect our environment, secure the livelihoods of future generations, and ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for all Ghanaians. The fight against galamsey is a fight for the soul of our nation, and we must act now to win it.

IAIA-Ghana is committed to assisting the government and other stakeholders in the elaboration of effective environmental legislation. Time is of the essence to rectify this before all our land and water systems, and the hope for the future, is destroyed.

Ebenezer Appah-Sampong



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