

Government has affirmed that it would work effectively with Civil Society Organizations and other stakeholders in the mining sector for the realization of the transformative perspective of the Africa Mining Vision (AMV). The AMV is a pathway agreed by African nations that put the continent's long term and broad development objectives at the heart of all policy-making concerned with mineral extraction. It sets out how mining can be used to drive continental development. It was adopted by Heads of States and Governments at February 2009 African Union (AU) Summit following the October 2008 meeting of African ministers responsible for Mineral Resources Development.

"The government of Ghana recognizes the important role that all these constituencies of civil society play in the development process and remains committed to working with them in Ghana and Africa regional processes for mining reforms that promote economic transformation and sustainable development", stated, Hon. Mike Hammah, Minister for Lands and Natural Resources. The Minister was speaking at the opening of the Pan- African Civil Society Networks Meeting on the Africa Mining Vision hosted by the Third World Network (TWN -Africa) in Accra on Tuesday. It was on the theme "Africa's Mining: From Boom and Dislocation to Boom and Transformation"

The AMV aims at ensuring transparency, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad based sustainable growth and socio- economic growth through downstream, upstream and side stream linkages. It further seeks to shift mineral policy beyond the focus on regimes devoted to the extraction of minerals and sharing of revenues. Hon. Hammah noted that Africa's abundant mineral resources presented potential wealth creation opportunities for socio-economic development. However, he lamented the rather slow rate at which mining was catalyzing long term, broad, based development on the continent of which Ghana is not an exception, hence the need for a paradigm shift.

"Until we develop our local industries to supply significant proportions of inputs needed by the mining sector and add value to the raw minerals produced, optimizing contribution from the exploitation of our minerals will be difficult," he added. He assured that Ghana would continue to participate actively in international, regional and sub-regional initiatives that would promote and enable the optimization of proceeds from mineral resources while ensuring that the mining industry did not engender environmental degradation - social tensions and poverty.

Oliver Maponga, Representative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), maintained that there was the need to dispense of the current dig and export

syndrome which had characterized mineral extraction on the continent and which clearly had not helped Africa's socio-economic development strides. He said the UNECA was always glad to share ideas on Africa's development and consult widely for cross-fertilization and the strengthening of position on continental issues. "We collectively seek to strengthen the foundation for the implementation of the Africa Mining Vision," he added.

Earlier, Dr Yao Graham, Coordinator of TWN-Africa, told participants that there was the need for African governments to strengthen their governance mechanism in the mineral sector to optimize its contribution to national development of mineral producing and exporting countries. "While the revival of foreign investment has expanded mineral production and exports, its contribution to social and economic development objectives has been far less certain and has even been contested in many countries across the continent," he observed.

According to him, the AMV document offered a framework for a shift away from the current regimes of mining towards a new set of regimes that optimizes the benefits and contribution of mining towards Africa's economic transformation. Moving on into the new regime as envisioned by the policy document, Dr Graham called for a strong constituency of change rooted in ownership and support within African society.

The grand event which ends today, 29 June, was jointly organized by African Initiative on Mining, Environment and Society (AIMES) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). It brought together about 50 participants drawn from African civil society networks and coalitions, social constituencies from labour movements, mining affected community groups, artisanal and small scale mining organizations, gender groups, policy makers and the media.

The meeting sought to, among other things, facilitate and deepen the understanding of the processes and substantive content of the reform agenda particularly in relation to the AMV; generate common understanding about opportunities and challenges around the African mining reform agenda as well as make input into the business plan for the African Mineral Development Centre (AMDC). The conference will conclude with the adoption of a common position for advocacy on the reform agenda as well as a set of recommendations for improving the effective functioning and the business plan of the AMDC.

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