

The Executive of Mining, Energy and Infrastructure Finance at Stanbic Bank Ghana, Ms Celiwe Ntuli has reiterated the Banks support for the extractive industry in the face of global challenges facing the sector. Gold prices on the world market have been on the decline leading to a slowdown in mining activities and staff layoffs among other challenges globally.

Speaking at a Electra Mining West Africa conference, Ms. Ntuli, said the mining sector would for a long time remain a key foreign exchange earner for the country and that the challenges facing the sector in recent times can best be described as temporary.

She said Standard Bank Group, parent company of Stanbic Bank Ghana, remains the continents largest supporter of mining and the sustainable exploitation of the continents natural resources and this support will be sustained irrespective of the challenges facing the extractive industry. She was speaking on the topic, "The Role of the Financial Services Sector in Growing the Mining Industry", at the conference held in Accra.

Ms. Ntuli said the Bank over the years had consistently supported the mining sector and noted that the most important objective of the bank is to be able to confront the challenges faced by clients in the sector. More regional interactions and collaborations are important across borders. One of the biggest value additions is to be able to solve energy problems, rail transportation, shipping of commodities, logistics, and finding solutions to problems facing the mining sector to help the industry grow, she added.

She indicated that Stanbic Bank Ghana and the Standard Bank Group have a deep specialization in natural resources financing, listing Mining and Metals, Oil and Gas, Power and Infrastructure, and Renewables as core areas of concentration.

The Banks aim is to raise capabilities in structuring and executing transactions in their regions of focus, and West Africa is a growth region for the Bank. We are Africas leading Bank in terms of assets and a great partner in natural resources finance, in particular. We have the right personnel who understand the processes and principles required to adequately manage the sector, she said.

She said the future looks good and that general market consensus is that commodity pricing will improve in 2015. Markets are elastic. In 2009, we saw improved conditions that were witnessed after a breakdown in 2008. The challenges were detected half way through 2012 and also in 2013, which were adequately resolved. Therefore, we are certain commodity prices as a whole will be more positive and brighter in 2015, she said.

Ghana's mining industry accounts for 5 per cent of the country's GDP, and minerals make up 37 per cent of total exports, of which gold contributes over 90 per cent of the total mineral exports. This makes financing a key instrument in the generation of feasible revenue in the mining sector.

Electra Mining West Africa 2014 conference offered a platform for industry players to promote investment and knowledge sharing for the enrichment of West Africa's mining sector. It also sought to deepen partnerships for sustainable development of mineral and energy resources in the region. West Africa is seen as a mining hotspot and as one of the world's fastest growing regions for gold production. It has experienced what has been referred to as the "West African gold rush".

Delegates included financiers, investors, mining professionals and West African government delegations vested in developing business interest, promoting new mining exploration opportunities and repositioning Ghana as an attractive gateway for investment in West Africa. The content focused on the potential opportunities, lessons learned and the creation of new business partnerships to facilitate and strengthen the economic development of Ghana.

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