

Land has been acquired for the establishment of the first public assaying laboratory in Ghana to certify minerals for export and domestic use.

"The Commission will ensure the speedy development of the proposed assay laboratory at the airport area where land has already been acquired. This will help in ascertaining the quality and purity of gold exports from Ghana, thereby determining the actual value and the proceeds thereof that will come to government," the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Minerals Commission, Dr Toni Aubynn, revealed this when he unveiled the Commission's strategic plan that is anchored on its vision and mission for the . Improvement of the country's mining industry.

"I think 10 years is too long [since reforms in the mining industry started] ... Cabinet is reviewing the national mining policy... I'm glad that government is doing that and we will support government," Dr Aubynn stated at his maiden media interaction held in Accra after he was appointed the Commission's CEO.

"I intend to deepen transparency by working with civil society organisations like the Ghana Coalition on Mining, and the Commission will open its doors for dialogue with them. We will revamp our media networking and develop our website and come out with a newsletter," he said. On the medium-term strategic direction, he said the Commission would soon announce a moratorium on prospecting licences to make concessions available for prospective investors and reduce the speculative holding of the licences. He said Ghana has lesser known minerals - as kaolin, mica, iron ore and zinc which were not being exploited. "The Commission will encourage prospective investors not to only explore the traditional minerals currently under production, but to venture into exploring other minerals ... Recent air-borne geographical findings in Ghana have indicated the occurrence of some minerals including copper, barite, phosphate, zinc, uranium, lead, chromites and columbite. These will be promoted to attract investors in the sector by way of diversifying the country's mineral exploitation," he said.

Dr. Aubynn said the Commission supported the integration of the mining sector with the rest of the economy. In that direction, the Commission would support the government to encourage prospective investors to develop an integrated bauxite industry; encourage the government to

consider the primary processing of manganese into sinter (value addition) before export; and push for the development of an integrated iron/steel industry.

"The Commission will intensify its engagement with industry to enhance local supply chain, development. The conscious development of the local supply chain holds the key to linking the mining sector to the rest of Ghana's economy so as to reap many benefits from mining," he stated. He noted that even though small-scale mining was good and contributed about 34% (1.34 million ounces) of annual gold production, he condemned illegal mining and confessed that the Commission "supports Government's use of the security forces to flush out these illegal miners as one of the measures to curb this menace."

Outlining measures to address 'galamsey,' he said the Commission would begin the Mincom Wide Area Network project to deploy a Wide Area Network to facilitate the provision of electronic services. It would also parcel suitable areas for small-scale mining concessions; encourage community-based co-operatives to acquire small-scale miners; and educate the public on the Small-Scale Mining law.

Source: Public Agenda