



NATIONAL CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT

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GCBC STATEMENTS ON GALAMSEY FROM 2009-2023

2009

Mining Industry

We have listened to three experts in the mining industry on the negative and positive aspects of the industry. We plead that this sector of our economy should be looked at carefully by all stake holders so as to achieve its intended purpose—economic advantage for Ghanaians and peace for Ghana and not an increase in poverty and denial of human rights. We will come back to this subject of mining and the oil find in the future.

2010

Respect for Creation

God is the Creator of all that exists. In creating man and woman in His image, he also charged them to work and cultivate the soil and care for creation (Gen. 2:5-6, 15). Since creation is a gift from God, humankind has an obligation and indeed a duty to use resources judiciously and so preserve and conserve enough resources in our world for the benefit of future generations.

Respect for creation has always been upheld in the culture of all peoples. For example, for all peoples in Ghana, there were and still are certain prohibitions that ensure the preservation and responsible use of natural resources. These include prohibitions against cutting trees from certain forests, farming on certain days of the week and fishing in some water bodies that were considered sacred; for people living along the coast, fishing on certain days was and is still prohibited.

Such prohibitions underscore not only the ingenuity of our forebears but also their insight and intelligence, as these were cultural ways of preserving the ecosystem. Currently, the over-exploitation and unbridled use of nature is threatening to disrupt the ecosystem as designed by the Creator and is undermining our survival, security and peace.

Negative Impact of Mining

Mining as an activity has been going on in the country for a long time, but regrettably we cannot affirm that the advantages derived from the mining activities are in any way commensurate with their disastrous impact on the natural environment.

As pastors, we also want to single out for attention the worrying development of mining in forest reserves. It is gradually becoming the trend for the government and some traditional rulers to grant foreign mining companies the concession to mine in forest reserves. The clearing of natural habitats for mining, especially surface mining, oil and gas exploration and exploitation has led to the unprecedented loss of biodiversity in the ecosystem, threatening a sizable number of plant and animal species. Accordingly, we advocate the immediate abolition of surface mining because of its obvious harmful social and environmental consequences. In this connection, we commend those traditional rulers who are making great efforts to protect the environment.

2015

The Laity and Care of the Environment

Closely linked to the health of the nation is the issue of the care of the environment. Time and again, we have spoken about the need to take good care of the environment on which we depend. We regret to note once again the persistent pollution of our water bodies, the littering of plastic waste everywhere, the careless felling of trees in our forests and savannah area and the rampant illegal mining (*galamsey*) operations in our towns and villages. We call on our Laity and indeed all Ghanaians to rise up against this indiscriminate destruction of our environment and water bodies. The authorities charged with protecting our natural resources should be up and doing.

We welcome the idea of the *National Sanitation Day* on every first Saturday of the month as laudable and commendable and appeal to all Catholics and all Ghanaians to actively participate in this exercise as a Christian duty and a civic responsibility. We urge all Ghanaians to acquire the habit, not only to clean up our surroundings but most importantly let us all learn how not to make our environment dirty in the first place.

We also strongly recommend the recent encyclical of Pope Francis on the care of creation called "*Laudato Si'*" to our Catholic faithful and all Ghanaians because it provides a good resource for all, but most especially, policy makers on the care of our environment. We can certainly do with more education on the care of the environment. All the Laity who are charged with the protection of the environment should know that the environment is God's handiwork. To protect it is being faithful to God.

2016

Reconciliation with Nature

Mercy must equally prompt our actions from harming our natural environment. Human beings connect with nature in various ways: "... *our bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters...*" (*Laudato Si'*, 2). The earth is our common home. Yet, we have inflicted harm of various kinds and degrees on our natural environment by our irresponsible use. We have plundered our environment recklessly through indiscriminate dumping of rubbish and industrial waste, 'galamsey' activities, logging, deforestation, water pollution and other forms of ecological degradation.

We urge all Catholics and Ghanaians in general, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which God has entrusted to our care and to reaffirm our personal vocation to be stewards of creation, and to implore His help for the protection of creation as well as His pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live.

God gave us the earth "*to cultivate and to take care of*" (*Gen 2:15*) in a balanced and respectful way. To cultivate too much and to care too little, is to sin. In this Year of Mercy and beyond, let us resolve to implore God's mercy for those sins against creation that we have not hitherto acknowledged and confessed. We likewise commit ourselves to taking concrete steps towards ecological conversion, which requires a clear recognition of our responsibility to ourselves, our neighbours, creation and the Creator.

We are unhappy with the growing incidence of land grab in the country and the indiscriminate acquisition of large tracts of land by multinational corporations, usually led by greedy and unpatriotic indigenes. While we do not discourage

investment in food production and opportunities for industrialization, we condemn land acquisition that robs Ghanaians of their heritage and impacts negatively on the ecosystems and food cultures of our people. We call on all key institutions, charged with the planning, administration and conservation of land, to stop the incidence of land grab.

The Catholic Church in Ghana embraces wholeheartedly the renewed work of mercy and care for our common home which “... *allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us...*” (*Laudato Si'*, 85). We pledge to demonstrate our care for our common home in simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness and makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.

We commend the current call, throughout the country, for the monthly clean-up exercises within our immediate surroundings. We further urge Ghanaians to do these exercises more frequently and religiously. As we seek to be godly, let us equally endeavour to be cleaner. We cannot be happy with the perception that Ghana is among the world's dirtiest countries. Let us treat our environment the very way we will treat ourselves since a healthy environment makes us healthier and happier.

2017

Galamsey Menace

We commend Government, the Media, Civil Society and Faith-based Organizations for their tireless efforts in fighting the menace of illegal mining that has plagued our nation. Let us sustain our efforts to reverse the harsh consequences of this self-inflicted destruction. We remind Ghanaians that our natural resources belong to those gone before us, those of us living and those who will come after us. We must therefore refrain from selfish exploitation of our natural resources to the extent that generations after us will be deprived of their fair share of these resources.

2018

Care for Our Environment

We recall the old adage that “*cleanliness is next to godliness*”. Our holiness is belied by the increasing filth and obscene piles of discarded plastics, electronic waste materials and other objects that choke our gutters, streets, and other public places. We also note the southwards expansion of desert-conditions which has been heightened by indiscriminate bush burning, wanton destruction of our forests, water-bodies, sale of large tracts of our prime lands to commercial entities for unchecked exploitation for profits (i.e. Land Grabbing). This situation aggravates the poverty of the local people and even deprives them of their agricultural livelihoods.

We have observed that our country, and for that matter Techiman diocese, where we have held our Plenary, has huge potentials for agriculture and tourism but are only marginally utilized. *The One District One Factory (1D1F) Programme* can therefore facilitate the full actualization of these potentials.

The Church remains an active voice calling for moderation and regulation in the exploitation of our natural resources. We are taking concrete actions to address the problem of poor sanitation with our new Electronic Waste Management Project and urge Government to be firm in its plans to address the sanitation and environmental problems. We are very much aware of the Government’s ban on illegal mining also known as “Galamsey”. We commend the Government on this decision as the practice destroys our water bodies and the ecology.

However, in negotiating with the small scale miners for their return to mine, care must be taken not to revert to the “Galamsey” practice.

2019

Exploitation of our Natural Resources and Climate Change

We, welcome the global events during the month of September that highlighted the precarious situation of our “*Common Home*”- the Environment and the need for urgent actions. We commend Government’s tireless efforts in fighting the menace of illegal mining that has plagued our nation. Unfortunately, it looks like the fight against illegal mining and deforestation has now become a mirage since the very institutions and personnel mandated to stop the menace are rather collaborating with the illegal miners and loggers for their selfish gains.

We continue to request Government, Traditional Leaders and other Stakeholders to further put in place measures that will help citizens refrain from the selfish

exploitation of our natural resources, leading to the pollution of water bodies and the destruction of forest reserves. Ghana is losing its forest cover at a very alarming rate with very visible signs of desert-like conditions now being experienced in the country.

Even rare and economic tree species like the rosewood and shea trees are being felled with impunity in Northern Ghana and in parts of the Oti Region. The continuous dumping and burning of hazardous waste; especially electronic and plastics at Agbogbloshie, Ashaiman and other cities in Ghana have become a public health menace.

2020

The Integrity of the Environment

Human beings connect with nature in various ways: “... *our bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters...*” (*Laudato Si*, 2). The earth is our common home. Yet, we continue to inflict harm of various kinds and degrees on our natural environment by our irresponsible use of it. We plunder our environment recklessly through indiscriminate dumping of refuse and industrial waste, ‘galamsey’ activities, logging, deforestation, water pollution and other forms of ecological degradation.

We remind Ghanaians that our natural resources belong to those gone before us, those of us living and those who will come after us. We must therefore refrain from selfish exploitation of our natural resources to the extent that generations after us will be deprived of their fair share of these resources.

2021

We appreciate the positive achievements chalked by successive governments of Ghana in the areas of infrastructure development, improved access to quality health, education and essential utilities such as water and electricity. However, we your Bishops and many other Ghanaians have observed that our numerous challenges persist. These challenges among others include: youth unemployment, bribery, corruption, greed, selfishness, lack of patriotism, poverty, deplorable roads, carnage on our roads, armed robbery, murder and other crimes, galamsey, weak and ineffective institutions of governance, abandoned and unfinished

government projects, the culture of impunity, examination malpractices, violence, intimidation, attack on media men and women, human trafficking and abductions.

This worrying state of our nation calls for some fundamental changes in our governance system with regard to strategic and well-structured development plans by all governments.

2022

Illegal Mining (*Galamsey*)

Another concern is the *galamsey* or illegal mining activities and their devastating effect on the environment, our water bodies, the forest reserves and the quality of life of our people. The experts have said that the widespread destruction of our forests cover does not only lead to emissions of greenhouse gases but also reduces the forests' ability to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, hence contributing to climate change.

It is common knowledge that the main financiers/kingpins of this illegal mining include chiefs, politicians, Regional Ministers, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs), Security Personnel among others. This is the main reason for our inability to uproot the menace of *galamsey* and have difficulty in prosecuting those arrested for their involvement in illegal mining. We urge the relevant agencies responsible for the protection and preservation of our natural resources to ensure the prosecution of the financiers of activities that result in major crisis facing the country such as illegal mining (*galamsey*).

One critical example is the call for prosecution of the owners of Akonta Mining Ltd., among others, who have been accused by the Minister of Lands & Natural Resources, confirmed by the Minerals Commission and reported in the media.

Our attention has been drawn to plans to start mining next year in parts of the Volta and Oti Regions. Considering the devastation of the environment at mining areas, particularly places where illegal mining has been rampant and careless, we strongly propose that a moratorium be placed on granting new concessions and issuing of licences for mining. In the case where any actions have already been taken, we propose that operationalizing of the agreements be placed on hold until a clear pathway is developed to ensure modern and environmentally friendly mining.

Meanwhile, the government in partnership with the private sector should engage all stakeholders to develop and operationalize alternative sources of livelihood for those involved in illegal mining. In addition, the security and intelligence agencies of the state should ensure the security and safety of all anti-*galamsey* activists.

2023

Destruction of the Environment through Illegal Mining (Galamsey)

We are still disturbed by the worsening environmental destruction, pollution of water bodies, and increased reports of babies born with deformities and kidney diseases resulting from ingesting and inhaling heavy metals in galamsey areas

We are also concerned about the introduction of the Environmental Protection (Mining in Forest Reserves) Regulations, 2022, LI 2462, which seemingly allow mining, even in globally significant biodiversity areas. We urge the government to take a critical look at this LI 2462, and as a matter of urgency, either amend or repeal it, in order to forestall the alarming trend of ecological destruction in the country.