

National debate on galamsey next month

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ACCRA

A Deputy Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Mr Benito Owusu-Bio, has announced that the government will organise a national debate on responsible mining next month to engage all stakeholders to find lasting solutions to the galamsey menace.

He said the debate would focus on issues such as the five-year Multilateral Mining Integration Project (MMIP) to develop small scale mining and move people out of illegal

mining activities.

Speaking in an interview after the launch of a strategic plan for Tropenbos Ghana (TBG), a non-governmental organisation committed to forest management, he said the discussion would be taken to four regions, namely Takoradi, Kumasi, Kkoruda and Tamale.

He said the plan was to broaden discussions as wide as possible to converge on how to reverse the over-exploitation and degradation of the country's lands and natural resources using appropriate technical, social and economic interventions.

"Government is not only interested in forest benefits but greatly committed to its sustainable

management. Thus, it has come out with several initiatives, such as the National Plantation Development Programme, all meant to strengthen our arms in dealing with deforestation and forest degradation," Mr Owusu-Bio said.

Governance challenges

A lecturer at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) School of Law, Mr Clement Akapame, cited the lack of clarity in the legal regime in the management of natural

resources, lack of coordination among resource managers and institutions and the absence of leadership and political will as some of the challenges facing the natural resources sector.

"We have adopted a four-year cyclical approach to the management of our natural resources. Institutions get energised after elections to discharge their mandates without fear or favour only to become lethargic in a couple of years," he said.

Sustainable development

The Secretary for Climate Change and Water at the Netherlands Embassy, Mr Fred Smeit, noted that the ongoing media campaign on galamsey was a good example of the role civil society could play to ensure sustainable

development.

"After months of sustained campaign in the media, the government feels compelled to act. Of course in the future CSOs need to keep up the efforts if government starts showing signs of complacency in enforcing mining regulations," he said.

TROPENBOS Ghana

The Programmes Director of TBG, Mr Samuel Kwabena Nketia, said the TBG Ghana had been very active and had made significant contributions to the forestry policy processes, good governance and capacity building.

Tropenbos, he said, was expanding its strategies to include lobbying and advocacy with a long-term view of becoming a think-tank in the forestry and environment sectors.

"The little study we have carried out in the area of forestry and environment shows we do not have many think-tanks operating and we seek to fill this gap eventually," he said.

Strategic plan and board

The strategic plan which spans 2017 to 2026 is in line with its transformation to become autonomous from Tropenbos International Ghana.

A seven-member board of directors has also been inaugurated to steer the affairs of TBG.

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