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Press Release Commemorating International Youth Day (IYD)

CeSIS Calls for Introduction of Green Small-Scale Mining on International Youth Day

Today is being commemorated around the world as International Youth Day (IYD). The day has been set up to recognize the key contributions of the youth in national development. This year's World Youth Day is being celebrated under the theme: "Green Skills for Youth: Towards a Sustainable World".

As a country with a very youthful population, the celebration of IYD over the years has provided us with an opportunity to throw the lens on the important role this critical segment of our population play. Over the years the contribution of the youth to our development has been downplayed. This is partly as a result of the country's own inability to meet the needs of the youth, especially in the areas of employment, inclusive development and access to socio-economic opportunities.

This year's theme for IYD could not have come at an opportune time for Ghana. It gives us an opportunity as a country to begin to look at "greener" ways of mining, which remain the backbone of our economy. The country is currently witnessing the unprecedented destruction of its natural resources like never before in its history. In key mining districts, illegal miners (popularly known as galamseyers), are destroying forest and land resources in a way that raises questions about their ability to be good stewards of the resources our ancestors bequeathed to us. These illegal miners destroy these resources with careless abandon, ignoring sustainability concerns. Sadly, a majority of these galamseyers are the youth.

The rate at which the country is losing its forest resources leaves no one in doubt that in the next decade, Ghana will not have a single forest reserve unscathed from the menace of galamsey. When this happens, we end up imperiling the flora and fauna that sustain human life. There is therefore an urgent need for the state to take bold, realistic and decisive action to save our future. And this will mean supporting the youth with the requisite knowledge, skills and technology to make a life for themselves.

It is in light of this that the Centre for Social Impact Studies (CeSIS), a research and advocacy non-governmental organisation committed to supporting communities impacted by the operations of mining, call on the government to take steps to push for green mining in order to save the environment. Specifically, the organisation calls on the government to:

1. Ban the use of harmful chemicals like mercury and cyanide in the mining industry as a whole, and in particular in small-scale mining. There are already some mercury-free machines like the "gold katcha", introduced by Commodity Monitor that can be popularized by the regulatory agencies.
2. Introduce innovative ways of mining to small-scale miners. Innovation will ensure that miners are able to recover more of the gold, and further reduce negative environmental footprints as a result of mining. Miners who breach this ban should be punished according to law
3. Update geological information and make this available to interested miners. This step is particularly necessary to prevent the "trial and error" method of mining where miners keep

digging up land till they hit ore bodies, by which time they might have caused significant destruction

4. Promote land reclamation among small-scale miners. There are currently innovative ways of ensuring land reclamation, and that includes undertaking massive afforestation initiatives in mined-out areas.

The Centre for Social Impact Studies (CeSIS) believes that the state should take every step necessary to empower the youth who have a passion for small-scale mining to do so in a greener and more sustainable way in order to preserve the environment for the next generation while raking in economic benefits.

We wish every Ghanaian youth a Happy World Youth Day!

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