

# Let's use scientific means to mine

## —Deputy Minister

**M**R Benito Owusu Bio, a Deputy Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, says the era of “trial and error” approach in prospecting for natural resources is over as it degraded the environment.

“I can say that about 50 per cent of the places these miners dug they didn't find anything, but they eventually destroyed the land, the forest and polluted the water bodies.

“Africa has a lot of resources but had not utilised the expertise of geoscientists in the extraction of natural resources,” he said.

It was time small-scale miners utilised the services of geoscientists to receive accurate geological data before mining to minimise the damage to the environment, he said.

Mr Owusu Bio told journalists on the sidelines of a trainer of trainers' workshop in Accra on Monday for 40 geoscientists drawn from Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia.

It was intended to share expe-

riences regarding the exploitation of natural resources and come out with recommendations that would contribute significantly towards the governance of the extractives to enhance resource utilisation.

The training was organised by the European Geological Surveys and Organisation of African Geological Surveys under the Work Package Three of Artisanal Small-scale Mining Training.

It was funded by the European Union (EU) through its Directorate-General for International Co-operation and Development, in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development of Canada.

It was expected to improve and reinforce geoscientific skills of African geoscientists, which would equip them with enhanced and relevant data and skills to provide better services to facilitate resource discovery and development.

The three-year Pan African Programme is intended to provide over 50 training sessions to 1,200 geologists from 54 African countries.

Mr Owusu Bio said the Multilateral Mining Integrated Programme Working Document, which would streamline small-scale mining in the country, was ready and would be launched next month.

Asked whether the six-month moratorium on small-scale mining, which is supposed to end this month would be extended, he said it would depend on how stakeholders co-operate with the directives, adding: “It's not about the time, but making sure that we all do the right thing and going forward, we will all be happy”.

Mr Owusu Bio said government was in the process of procuring sophisticated drones with an estimated budget of three million dollars, to monitor the activities of small-scale mining across the country since the security agencies could not be everywhere at the same time.

The drones are specially made and would be placed in command centres, he said, adding: “The drones can be in the air for 15 to 21 hours, and could also travel 200 kilometres away from the base station”.

They could take night vision



• Mr Benito Owusu Bio

recordings, geological footage and other data that would enhance the monitoring of mining operations in the country.

Mr Owusu Bio said in spite of these sophisticated equipment, there was the need for community involvement in the fight against illegal mining and that; “We need holistic approach to win the war against galamsey.”

Mr William Hanna, the European Union Ambassador to Ghana, urged the Government to ensure sustainable exploitation of the natural resources to benefit the ordinary citizen.

He entreated Government to ensure that the artisanal small-scale mining sector was properly regulated in order to create decent jobs

and livelihoods for the miners and prosperity for all Ghanaians.

“We know that extractive resources including oil, gas and minerals affect the socio-economic conditions of countries that represent half of the world's population. Some four billion people live today in countries whose economies have been shaped, to a large extent, by their natural resource endowments.

“Some countries have succeeded quite well in transforming their natural resources into assets for change.

“Unfortunately, for many others, abundance of natural resources has been a curse, while others have been able to translate natural wealth into economic and human development. —GNA