

News

New Abirim Chief wants Newmont to start operation ... Appeal to EPA to speed up permit process

From Isaac Akvetey, Ayayaso

THE CHIEF and people of New Abirim, of the Birim North District in the Eastern Region, have appealed to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to speed up the documentation process of granting Newmont Akyem Project the permit to start full operations.

They made the appeal at a public hearing organized by the company in conjunction with the EPA, under the Environmental Assessment Regulation 1999 section 17 of the EPA.

Speaking at the programme, the chief urged the EPA to grant the company the needed permit to start work as early as possible, since that would be the only means to solve the unemployment problems and teenage pregnancy among other social vices in the area.

According to them, any act of delay could compel the investors to take this golden opportunity away, since the area was not the only place in Ghana where one could find gold.

Notwithstanding this, the chiefs have also called on the residents of the area to use the establishment of the company to settle their differences, in order to have one common goal towards the development of the area.

On her part, the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Mines, Hon Esther Obeng Daapah expressed her appreciation to the management of the company, for their tireless support, commitment and dedication to the community.

According to her, the importance of the

programme can not be over looked since all stakeholders would have the opportunity to obtain good understanding of issues concerning mining operations.

The Minister, also the Member of Parliament (MP) of the area, assured Ghanaians and especially the residents of the area, about government's readiness to ensure that the laid down procedures are strictly followed by the company. She urged management of the company to broaden their social responsibility, in order to tackle the issues of misgiving, as well as support for social and community programme.

Hon. Daapah further asked Newmont to adhere to all environmental and other related obligations under the legal framework to ensure that the nation and the community are not left out in a state of disrepair after the operations.

She also called on the residents of the area to cooperate with the company and regulatory agencies before and during operations to enable the nation to benefit from its natural resources.

The Regional Vice President for Environment and Social Responsibility, Nick Cotts, said Newmont's vision is to become a gold company of choice through the industry's leading performance.

According to him, the company could only achieve that goal through the demonstration of leadership capabilities, stewardship of the environment and social responsibility.

Community supports Newmont for jobs

THE Ghana News Agency has reported that the chiefs and youth of Birim North in the Eastern Region on Friday appealed to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to permit Newmont Golden Ridge Limited (NGRL), a subsidiary of Newmont Mining Corporation, to commence mining in its Akyem concession, saying the project would create jobs in the area.

This was contained in statements made by various chiefs and youth groups at a public hearing organised by the EPA at Yayaaso to seek views on the project, in accordance with the Ghana Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures.

However, despite the overwhelming support for the project, another group of the youth, led by one Mr Kwabena Frimpong, expressed displeasure with compensation fees being paid by the company for cropped lands, saying they were very low.

He cited the fees as GH¢4,100 for an acre of cocoa farm, GH¢1,500 for an acre of oil palm and GH¢1,600 for an acre of citrus.

Mr Frimpong, supported by other members of the group, maintained that they would not give up their lands which fall within

the concession to be mined unless the compensation fees are increased, taking into consideration the value and lifespan of trees on the affected farms.

Reacting to the concerns of the group, Mr Appiah Kusi Obodum, Environmental and Social Responsibility Coordinator of the project, said farmers who received compensation for their lands could in addition enjoy the company's livelihood restoration programme.

He said under the programme, NGRL was providing funds to help displaced farmers to acquire new farm lands and also provide consultancy and agriculture extension services for their new farms, in addition to making resources available for management of the farms up to three years when it is expected that the crops would start bearing fruits.

Mr A. A. C. Andoh, Director of Mining at the EPA, said the Agency did not grant mining permit to Newmont in an earlier application because its Environmental Impact Statements at the time did not meet the requirements.

He said the EPA would continue to ensure that the country's environmental laws relating to mining were met by prospective companies

and gave the assurance that it would take into account all issues raised at the public hearing before granting a permit to Newmont.

Mr Andoh said that EPA could withdraw a permit at anytime if it finds out that a mining company is not performing according to approved Environmental Impact Statement.

Opanin Kwadjo Kyei, head of the Adjenua family, who was the spokesman for the chiefs and people of Adjenua, denied that the community had protested against mining in the area.

He urged management of NGRL to help raise the standard of education in the Birim North area as part of their social responsibility for the people, adding that if possible, the company should establish a university that would produce human capital for development.

Osabarima Owusu Gyamerda, spokesman for the Akyem Kotoko Traditional area, appealed to the chiefs in the area to unite to enable them to derive the best out of NGRL's investment.

He warned that any act of disunity would create a fertile ground for the company and others operating in the area to exploit their differences at the cost of the district's

development.

The Minister for Lands, Forestry and Mines, Ms Esther Obeng Dappah said the government was committed to openness and transparency in the processes leading to mine development and would not cut corners but would ensure that the right procedures were followed.

She assured all stakeholders that regulatory agencies in the country including the District Assembly have the capacity to ensure that the right procedures were followed by mining companies.

Ms Dappah advised the New Abirim community to cooperate with NGRL and the regulatory agencies to enable the nation obtain the utmost benefit from its natural resources.

In a statement presented at the forum and read by one Mr Kwesi Johnson, a group of non-governmental organisations, led by the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining, called on the EPA not to grant NGRL's permit because it would engage in surface mining which would destroy the Adjenua Bepo Forest Reserve.

Source: GNA

Grant Newmont operational licence

Story: A. Kotoya-Tetteh, Yaayaso

THE chiefs and people in the Birnin North District of the Eastern Region, where Newmont Ghana, a gold mining company, is currently prospecting for the mineral, last Friday asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to grant the company operational license to enable it to start full operation.

This, they said, had become necessary, since Newmont had satisfied all the requirements to begin work, which, according to them, would be beneficial to the affected communities.

Some of the chiefs and opinion leaders who made the call were Osaburima Owusu Gyamea III a representative of the Omanene of Akyem Kotoku, the traditional overlord; Nana Kwame Fosu who represented the Afoahene, Opanin Kwadwo Kyi, from Agyansa, Mr Joseph Tetteh, a spokesman for all the hamlets surrounding Adasena, and Mr Appiah Darlewa from Yaw Tannor.

Two persons, Mr Kwabena Frimpong, from Yaayaso and Madam Ama Dapaah, a 70-year-old cocoa farmer from Hweakwae, who claimed Newmont had not yet compensated her for her cocoa farm which it destroyed, however, dissented.

They made the call at a public hearing on the activities of the company at Yaayaso, one of the main communities in the company's operational areas.

The public hearing, the third in a series, brought together chiefs, opinion leaders and people from about 13 communities within the company's operational areas, some of which are Ntronnang, Akyansa, Ahsu, New Abirem, Old Abirem, Adasena, Yaw Tannor and Hweakwae.

Also present were representatives from the EPA, Forestry Commission, Minerals Commission, coalition of non-governmental organisations on mining, as well as the Minister of Lands, Forestry and Mines, Madam Esther Obeng Dapaah.

Making the call on behalf of the people, Osaburima Gyamea III, said since Newmont had satisfied laid-down conditions and its activities would be beneficial to the people, it should be given licence to go into full operation.

He, however, called on the sub-chiefs in the area to unite to enable the people, as well as themselves, to get the full benefits such as royalties otherwise Newmont would take advantage of any disagreement among them to withhold financial packages that would be due them.

Osaburima Gyamea, who appealed to the people to co-operate with Newmont to enable the company to assist the communities to improve the living condition of the people, was of the view that Newmont would live up to expectation.

Addressing the gathering, Madam Esther Dapaah asked Newmont to honour all its environmental and other related obligations under the legal framework to ensure that the affected communities and the nation did not become worse off after the company had completed its operations.

She also asked the regulatory agencies such as the Minerals Commission, the EPA, the district assembly and chiefs in the area to ensure that Newmont followed the right procedures in its operations.

The minister, who expressed the hope that Newmont would put sustainable corporate social responsibility projects in place to tackle any misgivings of the people in the area, was of the view that when the processes permitting mine development were completed and all issues addressed, it would ensure a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

The Regional Vice-President of Newmont Ghana Gold Limited in charge of Environment and Social Responsibility, Mr Nick Cortis, said the company had designed its project in the area taking into consideration technical, environmental and social aspects, as well as engineered solutions and developed plans that would maximise the benefits and mitigate the negative impacts in accordance with Ghanaian laws and international

www.ghanaweb.com: General News of Saturday, 5 July 2008

Chiefs, youth express support for Newmont's Akyem project

Yayaaso (E/R), July 5, GNA - The Chiefs and the youth of Birim North on Friday appealed to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to permit Newmont Golden Ridge Limited (NGRL), a subsidiary of Newmont Mining Corporation, to commence mining in its Akyem concession, saying the project would create jobs in the area. This was contained in statements made by various chiefs and youth groups at a public hearing organised by the EPA at Yayaaso to seek views on the project, in accordance with the Ghana Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures.

However, despite the overwhelming support for the project, a small group of the youth, led by one Mr Kwabena Frimpong, expressed displeasure with compensation fees being paid by the company for cropped lands, saying they were very low.

He cited the fees as GHc1,100 for an acre of cocon farm, GHc1,500 for an acre of oil palm and GHc1,600 for an acre of citrus. Mr Frimpong, supported by other members of the group, maintained that they would not give up their lands which fall within the concession to be mined unless the compensation fees are increased, taking into consideration the value and lifespan of trees on the affected farms. Reacting to the concerns of the group, Mr Appiah Kusi Obodum, Environmental and Social Responsibility Coordinator of the project, said farmers who received compensation for their lands could in addition enjoy the company's livelihood restoration programme. He said under the programme, NGRL was providing funds to help displaced farmers to acquire new farm lands and also provide consultancy and agriculture extension services for their new farms, in addition to making resources available for management of the farms up to three years when it is expected that the crops would start bearing fruits.

Mr A. A. C. Andoh, Director of Mining at the EPA, said the Agency did not grant mining permit to Newmont in an earlier application because its Environmental Impact Statements at the time did not meet the requirements.

He said the EPA would continue to ensure that the country's environmental laws relating to mining were met by prospective companies and gave the assurance that it would take into account all issues raised at the public hearing before granting a permit to Newmont. Mr Andoh warned that EPA could withdraw a permit at anytime if it finds out that a mining company is not performing according to approved Environmental Impact Statement.

Opanin Kwadjo Kyei, Abusua panyin of Adjenua who was the spokesman for the chiefs and people of Adjenua, denied that the community had protested against mining in the area.

He urged management of NGRL, to help raise the standard of education in the Birim North area as part of their social responsibility for the people, adding that if possible, the company should to establish a university that would produce human capital for development. Obaforima Owusu Gyametu, spokesman for the Akyem Kotoku Traditional area, appealed to the chiefs in the area to unite to enable them to derive the best out of NGRL's investment.

He warned that any act of dissunity would create a fertile ground for the company and others operating in the area to exploit their differences at cost of the district's development. The Minister for Lands, Forestry and Mines, Ms Esther Obeng Dappah said the government was committed to openness and transparency in the processes leading to mine development and would not cut legal corners but would ensure that the right procedures were followed. She assured all stakeholders that regulatory agencies in the country including the District Assembly have the capacity to ensure that the right procedures were followed by mining companies. Ms Dappah advised the New Abirim community to cooperate with NGRL and the regulatory agencies to enable the nation obtain the utmost benefit from its natural resources. In a statement presented in the forum, a group of non-governmental organisations, led by the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining, called on the EPA not to grant NGRL's permit because it would engage in surface mining which would destroy the Ajenjua Bepo Forest Reserve. One Mr Kwesi Johnson, read the statement on behalf of the group.

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Mr Frimpong, supported by other members of the group, maintained that they would not give up their lands which fall within the concession to be mined unless the compensation fees are increased, taking into consideration the value and lifespan of trees on the affected farms.

Reacting to the concerns of the group, Mr Appiah Kusi Obodum, Environmental and Social Responsibility Coordinator of the project, said farmers who received compensation for their lands could in addition enjoy the company's livelihood restoration programme.

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He warned that any act of disunity would create a fertile ground for the company and others operating in the area to exploit their differences at the cost of the district's development.

The Minister for Lands, Forestry and Mines, Ms Esther Obeng Dappah said the government was committed to openness and transparency in the processes leading to mine development and would not cut corners but would ensure that the right procedures were followed.

She assured all stakeholders that regulatory agencies in the country including the District Assembly have the capacity to ensure that the right procedures were followed by mining companies.

Ms Dappah advised the New Abirim community to cooperate with NGRL and the regulatory agencies to enable the nation obtain the utmost benefit from its natural resources.

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Source: GNA

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By GNA

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