

NMA Director General Shares Experience on Benefit Optimization and Artisanal Mining...

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The Director General of the National Minerals Agency (NMA), Sahr Wonday, during the past week joined government officials from 62 nations and representatives from the mining industry, civil society and academia to share experience and to learn about the latest developments in efforts to leverage mining for sustainable development.

The Director General was representing Sierra Leone at the 13th Annual General Meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF), which was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland from 16 to 20 October 2017.

Sahr Wonday, who has a wealth of experience in mining and development issues was accorded the privilege of serving as a panellist in two different sessions at the conference; one on 'Combating Mispricing by Strengthening Mineral Testing Facilities' and the other on 'Voluntary Sustainability Initiatives for the Mining Sector'. This honour placed the DG among a diverse slate of panellists comprising leading experts in mining to discuss mining and sustainable development issues.

Sharing the Sierra Leone experience on efforts made by Government to optimize benefits by combating mispricing and strengthening minerals testing, the Mr. Wonday explained that the NMA has deployed Inspectors at the export points of all mining companies to conduct pre-shipment inspection and collect data on mineral exports. The NMA also collects representative samples of all minerals exports, which are then sent through laboratory tests to determine the minerals content. He informed his audience that Sierra Leone, with support from the World Bank, now has a well-equipped minerals testing laboratory. The above measures, he went on provides reliable information to Government on the quantity and quality of the minerals exported from Sierra Leone, which in turn give a fair idea of the price, to determining royalty and other payments to Government.

Participants raised questions about conceptual and practical difficulties related to addressing transfer pricing, considering the differences between illegal tax evasion practices and tax avoidance practices that remain within the bounds of legality. They discussed ways to address various technical and capacity challenges for governments, including through sharing of information to promote market and price transparency, and joint regional laboratory facilities for minerals testing.

Speaking on 'Voluntary Sustainability Initiatives for the Mining Sector', Sahr Wonday, explained how the Diamond Development Initiative (DDI) Works with stakeholders in Sierra Leone to effect systemic change within the artisanal and small-scale mining sector. He noted that since 2012, DDI has been working with stakeholders in Kono to effect systemic change, and efforts has been focused on formalization to integrate 'artisanal and small-scale mining' (ASM) into the formal economy, with benefits to miners, communities, government and industry. The project has also been working with miners to legalize their operations, thereby ensuring that their efforts contribute to Government revenue and improved living conditions for them.

The conference noted the there has been huge growth in the number and diversity of voluntary sustainability initiatives (VSIs) in the mining and minerals sector, and the panel examined how they compare, and how they contribute to sustainable development and the sustainable development goals

(SDGs).

The AGM offered an excellent opportunity to engage with top experts in the mining and to learn about the latest developments in efforts to leverage mining for sustainable development. The theme of this year's meeting was Managing Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM). However, the programme also covered a wide range of other topics including: tax base erosion and profit shifting; local content policies; mine closure; voluntary sustainability initiatives; and environmental impact assessment.

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