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Ghanaian Minister for the Environment announces two key initiatives for sustainable use of natural resources

The sustainable use of natural resources will be at the heart of debates at the first World Resources Forum for Africa (WRF2020), which has today been officially announced by the Honourable Minister H.E. Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng at the Swiss Embassy in Accra. WRF2020 will be hosted by the Ministry for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) on 23 -25 June 2020 at the Accra international Conference Center, Ghana. In combination with the announcement of WRF2020, the second phase of the Sustainable Recycling Industries project has been launched, both initiatives being strongly supported by the Swiss Government.

Ghana's mining industry is contributing approximately 5% to the national GDP and is thus an important backbone for Ghana's economy. Informal recycling activities add another stream of resource extraction to the local economy. But besides opportunities, both sectors are also causing environmental and social issues, including "galamsey" or illegal mining activities in the north and cable burning to recover copper in the infamous Accra Agbogbloshie scrap yard.

In his opening speech, Minister Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng emphasized on the high political priority given to the topics ensuring current and future well-being of the people in Ghana and Africa. Mr. Frimpong Boateng had already impressed participants of last year's WRF conference in Switzerland in his keynote introducing the sustainability agenda of Ghana. WRF conferences are held every second year in Geneva, prominently supported by the Swiss Government through the Federal Office for the Environment.

"In its pioneering role as one of the leading West African countries, we see Ghana as best suited to host the first WRF conference in Africa and to discuss the environmental issues at stake in an informal multi-stakeholder dialogue", the Ambassador of Switzerland, Mr. Philipp Stalder highlighted in his welcome note. Ambassador Stalder also recalled that Ghana and Switzerland maintain a successful and longstanding partnership, which recently culminated in an official state visit of President Nana Akufo-Addo to Switzerland.

Switzerland, a country which has few mineral resources of its own, is a key importer of Ghana's raw materials, such as gold and cocoa. With its support to the WRF2020 and SRI, Switzerland is making a relevant contribution to the sustainable extraction of natural resources and to a fair recovery of raw materials from waste.

Bruno Oberle, president of the WRF association and former Director of the Federal Office for the Environment in Switzerland, reiterated on the several joint projects WRF has been implementing with MESTI over the past decade in the field of natural resources: *“Having our yearly global conference with our partner in Ghana is a true highlight for our association”*, he said.

The conference in June will be organized around three interlinked topics under the headlines “Fair resource extractions for a quality future”, “From waste to resources for development” and “Making a case for circular resources”. The conference will feature high level plenary sessions, parallel workshops, scientific sessions, as well as side events. Environmental challenges related to primary extraction of mineral resources and sustainable infrastructure have never been so high on the international political agenda. In this context, the WRF 2020 offers international stakeholders a platform to walk the talk, particularly in view of the Fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5, Nairobi, 22-26.2.2021).

The conference counts on the support of a high-level Scientific Committee headed by Prof. Christopher Gordon from the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies at the University of Ghana. The conference is supported by the Swiss Government, the German Technical Cooperation GIZ, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the Ghana Environmental Protection Agency, the United Nations University in Ghana and the UN International Resource Panel.

The Delegation of the European Union to Ghana will be organizing a Circular Economy seminar as a side event to the conference. The event will be combined with a Circular Economy mission organized by the DG Environment from the European Commission to promote synergies and business opportunities between Ghanaian and European companies.

Today’s event held at the Residence of the Swiss Ambassador also featured the launch of the second phase of the Sustainable Recycling Industries (SRI) project, a Swiss funded programme building capacity for sustainable e-waste recycling in developing countries. The SRI project started in 2014. *“A key result of the project was the development of the Technical Guidelines on Environmentally Sound E-waste Management as mandatory requirements for the recycling industry in Ghana”*, John Pwamang, Director of the Environmental Protection Agency, explained.

The second project phase will consolidate many activities started in the first phase. Among others, the project contributes to the development of policies, requirements and standard operating procedures for sound management of e-waste. *“The project will raise awareness amongst producers and importers of e-equipment to actively engage for sound e-waste management, which ultimately will transform our sector into a professionalized recycling industry”*, expects Mohammed Ali, representative of the Greater Accra Scrap Association.

The SRI Ghana project is implemented by the Ghana National Cleaner Production Centre, Mountain Research Institute (MRI) and the German Oeko-Institute in close collaboration with MESTI, the Environmental Protection Agency and further stakeholders from the informal sector, producers, importers and recycling industry.

About the World Resources Forum:

The World Resources Forum (WRF) association is the science-based platform for sharing knowledge about the economic, political, social and environmental implications of global resource use. WRF promotes innovation for resource productivity by building bridges among researchers, policymakers, business, SMEs, NGOs and the public. WRF conferences are widely recognized for their global and multidisciplinary character, gathering participants from all over the world and offering international stakeholders a platform to *walk the talk*. Previous WRF conferences have taken place in Switzerland (Geneva 2019/2017, Davos 2015/2013/2011), Belgium (Antwerp 2019), Costa Rica (San Jose 2016), Australia (Sydney 2015), Peru (Arequipa 2014), and China (Beijing 2012). Besides organizing conferences, the WRF association is coordinating large stakeholder consortia programmes for development cooperation and the European Commission in the area of resources governance, mining and recycling.

About the Sustainable Recycling Industries (SRI) project:

The SRI project Ghana is part of the global Sustainable Recycling Industries programme, with participation of Egypt, Ghana, South Africa, Colombia and Peru. SRI aims at building capacity for sustainable e-waste recycling by supporting national initiatives and implementing pilot projects. The first phase of the SRI programme has been implemented from 2013 – 2018 and is now in its second phase from 2019 – 2023. The programme is funded by the Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) and is implemented by the Institute for Materials Science & Technology (Empa) and the World Resources Forum (WRF).

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Internet links:

- Conference webpage: <http://wrf2020.wrforum.org>
- Sustainable Recycling Industries (SRI) project: <http://www.sustainable-recycling.org>
- Ministry for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI): <http://mesti.gov.gh>
- World Resources Forum: <http://www.wrforum.org>



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