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## **STATEMENT BY WACAM PRESENTED AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE HELD IN TARKWA ON 11<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2007**

Mr Chairman,  
Members of the Press,

WACAM has invited you to this Press Conference to express concerns about some pertinent issues relating to mining impacts.

WACAM has been working on mining and youth issues and the concerns that form the basis of this press conference results from our experiences in working on mining issues at the community and national levels.

We recognise that there had been massive inflows of Foreign Direct Investment into the extractive sector with the extractive sector attracting about 70% of the total FDI inflows into the economy of Ghana.

Increasing dependence on the extractive sector which has minimal linkages with other sectors of the economy would lead to the collapse of important sectors of the economy especially agriculture.

Ghana has been effective in attracting mining investment but we have failed to regulate the mining industry resulting in minimal benefits to the nation and increased negative effects.

Our organisation note that, the gold price is at an all time high, hovering around \$650 per ounce and the mining industry is optimistic that the gold price may hit \$1000 per ounce in the course of the year. According to a research by PriceWaterHouse Coopers, the global mining industry had a spectacular year in 2006 with net profits up 64%.

The Minerals and Mining Act, 2006,(Act 703) provide that mining companies pay 3-6% as royalty on gross mineral mined but in practice , all mining companies had been paying 3% royalty. We are requesting government to investigate the reasons for the payment of the lowest rate of royalty (3%) at a time when the mining companies are enjoying windfall profits for which they have increased their rate of mining to take advantage of the increasing gold price.

Our organisation has been concerned about Police and Military brutalities in mining communities. Added to this is the intimidation of community people and activists who defend the rights of marginalised mining communities. We have as an example, the arrest and detention of five community people from Yamfo and Kenyase who were arrested in November 2006 based on a complaint by Newmont officials that a community meeting was convened with

the name of Newmont and also for having a meeting in the Yamfo community without Police permit. We know that it is not a requirement under the Public Order Law for citizens of Ghana to seek Police permit before convening a community meeting to discuss issues that affect their welfare. The five community people were arraigned before a Circuit Court in Sunyani and committed to 2-week Prison custody after they had declined to plead guilty as suggested by the trial Judge. In committing the community people to Prison custody, the trial Judge stated in open court that in recent times, the mining communities had been disturbing the foreign mining companies and he was committing community people to Prison custody to serve as a deterrent to other community activists. Since November 2006, the five community people have been going to court on bail many times without the substantive case being heard.

We wish to call on the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General to expedite action on the petition of the five community people for the cancellation of the case, since they are not been tried under any law of Ghana. Early this year , 3,000 Trade Unionists, Lecturers, Students from Tertiary and Second cycle institutions, NGOs, community people and patriotic Ghanaians condemned the arrest and detention of the 5 community people in a signature campaign organised by WACAM.

We want to re-affirm the position of Civil Society organisations against mining in forest reserves and support the stand of the communities around the Ajenua Bepo forest reserve against mining in the Ajenua Bepo forest reserve. In this regard, we encourage the Environmental Protection Agency to continue to protect the Ajenua Bepo Forest reserve against the attempts by Newmont to mine in the forest reserve.

We recognise the critical role of the media in providing a voice to the poor mining communities and call on the media to continue its mine watch role despite the many difficulties.

We thank you for supporting the course of development.

Signed

Daniel Owusu-Koranteng  
**Executive Director WACAM**