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Joint MINCOM - MINMIDT Press Briefing on the Theme: « The New Face of Cameroon's Mining Sector with the Launch of Major Projects and the Restructuring of the Gold Sector »

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MINISTER OF MINES, INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (Ag.)

YAOUNDÉ, 15 JULY 2026

Mr Minister of Communication, Government Spokesperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, following the remarks of the Minister of Communication, I would like to warmly welcome you and thank you for your strong presence at this important engagement with the national and international press. I wish to extend special appreciation to the Minister of Communication and Government Spokesperson for joining me today. His initiative and participation reflect the Government's firm commitment to communicating openly and transparently on the far-reaching reforms currently being implemented in the mining sector. This press conference is taking place at a decisive moment, one that may rightly be described as historic in the development and responsible management of our country's mineral resources.

In this regard, I would like to share with members of the media the encouraging developments taking place in our country's mining sector, as well as its projected growth and transformation in the years ahead.

I will also address the specific situation of the gold sector, which has been the subject of considerable public debate in recent months following the publication of the 2023 EITI Report.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A - IN 2025, CAMEROON'S MINING SECTOR TAKES ON A NEW FACE AND CAMEROON BECOMES AN INDUSTRIAL MINING COUNTRY

Since the colonial era, Cameroon has always been described as a country with 'high mining potential'. For decades, geography textbooks and expert circles alike have repeatedly referred to the wealth of our subsoil, invariably citing the Minim-Martap bauxite deposit and the iron ore deposits of the Kribi range.

Yet this exceptional potential remained insufficiently developed, confining our mining policy to a form of wait-and-see approach or extractive inertia. It is also worth clarifying that, apart from artisanal gold, Cameroon has never exported any other mineral. These are visible bulk commodities that can only be transported by ship and therefore cannot be moved without public knowledge.

Accordingly, claims often made by certain experts and politicians that minerals other than gold are being looted are automatically contradicted by the facts and may be regarded as erroneous and made in bad faith.

Today, under the visionary leadership of the President of the Republic, **His Excellency Paul Biya**, **2025 stands as a historic year for our country**, as it definitively marks our entry into the select group of mining nations through the commissioning of **five major mining projects**, namely:

- The Bipindi Grand-Zambi iron ore project, with an annual production capacity of two million (2,000,000) tonnes of marketable iron concentrate. Exports have begun, and the company has started processing the iron concentrate into iron billets at the Fifinda plant to supply the domestic market;
- The Kribi-Lobé iron ore project, with an annual production capacity of four million (4,000,000) tonnes of marketable iron concentrate. The first exports will begin in 2027;
- The Minim-Martap industrial bauxite project, with an eventual annual production capacity of five million (5,000,000) tonnes of high-grade bauxite and two million four hundred thousand (2,400,000) tonnes of alumina. The first locomotives for transporting the ore have already arrived in Douala, and the remaining units are expected next August;
- The Bidzar industrial marble project, with a guaranteed annual production capacity of six hundred and sixty-eight thousand (668,000) tonnes of limestone;
- The Colomine gold project, the first milestone in industrial gold mining, with an annual production capacity of three hundred and seventy-three (373) kilograms of gold.

WHAT BENEFITS ARE EXPECTED FROM THESE PROJECTS, AND WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS?

The immediate benefits expected by the State from these large-scale projects will derive from revenues generated through duties and taxes, production-sharing arrangements, and the State’s 10% free-carried equity interest held through **SONAMINES, ordinary corporate taxes**, and revenue from the use of State-owned logistics infrastructure, not to mention the creation of thousands of direct and indirect jobs for our young people.

Looking ahead, the Government intends to further expand the portfolio of mining projects entering the production phase. Throughout 2026, several other major projects are expected to advance into active implementation, notably the Mbalam, Nkout and Ngovayang iron ore projects, as well as the Mborguéné and Bibemi industrial gold mining projects.

In the short term, the revenue **expected** from these major projects, together with a restructured gold sector, can be conservatively projected at more than one thousand (1,000) billion **CFA francs** per year, well above the current contribution of the oil sector.

In the medium and long term, the planned exploitation of rare earth elements and critical minerals in three regions of our country will make it possible to double the above-mentioned contribution of the solid minerals sector to two thousand (2,000) billion CFA francs per year for the Public Treasury.

B - RESTRUCTURING OF THE GOLD SECTOR

To provide the national and international public with a clear and comprehensive understanding of the situation through your respective media channels, **I would first like to outline the respective roles of the institutional stakeholders involved in the sector, before presenting the measures adopted by the Government to ensure its lasting reform and the results achieved thus far.**

1. *CLEAR DEFINITION OF THE ROLES AND INVOLVEMENT OF STATE INSTITUTIONS IN THE GOLD VALUE CHAIN*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mining regulation in Cameroon is implemented through a rigorous institutional chain in which each State actor performs a clearly defined, sovereign and complementary role, in order to guarantee the traceability of physical and financial flows.

The Ministry responsible for Mines (MINMIDT): It is exclusively involved in defining, developing and implementing the national mining policy. It performs the sovereign role of regulator. It is not, and will never be, a market operator; it does not engage in the purchase or resale of gold. Its role is to grant mining rights and ensure compliance with the regulations governing gold mining activities. Just as its role in the hydrocarbons sector is limited to signing crude-oil lifting authorisations, MINMIDT co-signs gold export certificates initiated by SONAMINES at the production site.

SONAMINES: As the operational arm of the State, SONAMINES' responsibilities are clearly defined by the Mining Code. Article 116 provides that: 'the control and monitoring of the production, marketing, processing or beneficiation of precious and semi-precious substances from artisanal and semi-mechanised artisanal mining shall be the responsibility of the duly mandated public body.'

This provision makes it clear that no other institution is mandated to collect and market gold from artisanal mining in general. Furthermore, when collecting the State's share, SONAMINES simultaneously collects the export tax at source directly at the mining sites and initiates the export procedure. It performs this collection function jointly with the General Directorate of Taxation.

The General Directorate of Customs (DGD): It operates at borders and customs checkpoints to conduct the final compliance inspection of consignments before they leave the national territory. Customs ensures that the volumes exported strictly correspond to the quantities previously certified by SONAMINES and co-signed by MINMIDT.

The General Directorate of Taxation (DGI): By law, this Administration is responsible for collecting all duties and taxes in every sector of the economy, particularly in the gold sector. However, it has currently delegated part of this responsibility to SONAMINES because the tax is collected in kind. It may therefore intervene at any time, either to collect directly or jointly with SONAMINES, or to carry out tax reassessments pursuant to the Manual of Tax Procedures, which applies to all taxpayers.

The Security Forces (National Gendarmerie, Armed Forces and Police): They provide the indispensable operational support required on the ground. They secure mining sites, protect inspection officers against attacks, combat the infiltration of cross-border criminal networks, and provide assistance in enforcing the closure of illegal sites.

The National Permanent Secretariat of the Kimberley Process (SNPPK): It provides cross-cutting international traceability for precious substances, ensuring that Cameroon's label remains clean and compliant with global requirements.

2. GOVERNMENT MEASURES CURRENTLY BEING IMPLEMENTED

A - Introduction of a Minimum Production Threshold for Semi-Mechanised Operations

While industrial mining provides full visibility through prior feasibility studies, the artisanal mining sector has historically been affected by deep-rooted abuses driven by operators' pursuit of quick profits.

This is a global problem. In Africa, the gap between declared production and actual exports has reached alarming proportions: 29 tonnes of gold in Sudan, 18 tonnes in Chad, and as much as 57 tonnes in Mali in 2025.

In Cameroon, mechanisation introduced more than a decade ago by foreign firms increased estimated gross production from 2 tonnes to more than 15 tonnes per year. Yet the share captured by the national economy in the form of public revenue remained negligible.

Unlike some countries that chose, at times with the involvement of the armed forces, to remove these operators from their territory, Cameroon, true to its tradition of hospitality, opted to regulate the activity by structuring semi-mechanised artisanal mining, with the primary objective of enabling Cameroonian nationals to access this wealth.

Cameroon's current tax legislation, through Sections 25(1) and 116 of the Mining Code and the 2024 Finance Law, provides that the composite tax (25%) and export tax (5%) be collected at source on the production site by SONAMINES in the semi-mechanised sector, which accounts for more than 90% of current gold production in Cameroon.

The problem is that operators take advantage of Cameroon's self-assessment tax system by declaring figures that are very low and far removed from actual production. Consequently, the amounts collected fall well short of reflecting the true level of production.

Since our current system will remain declaration-based, MINMIDT is proposing a rigorous calculation method based on a scientifically established minimum production level and a collection system operating directly at the source. The minimum production threshold will therefore become the entry requirement for the semi-mechanised sector.

Because duties and taxes are collected at source rather than at exit points, if declarations are accurate and the corresponding duties and taxes are properly

calculated, there will be no discrepancy, given that 90% of gold is produced through semi-mechanised operations, as I mentioned earlier.

B - IDENTIFICATION OF ILLEGAL SITES, DISMANTLING OF EQUIPMENT AND CLOSURE OF THE SITES CONCERNED

This is the cornerstone of our determination to clean up the sector. At the beginning of this restructuring and clean-up campaign, despite the vast area to be covered—more than one-third of Cameroon's territory—MINMIDT, with the support of the intelligence services, the Kimberley Process and civil society organisations, identified more than two hundred (200) mining companies operating in complete illegality, without any authorisation or mining right.

In response to this uncontrolled situation, the Government acted immediately and decisively: all the sites were closed and the equipment dismantled.

I personally led a field mission and witnessed these dismantling operations.

C- INITIATION OF LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST OPERATORS OF ILLEGAL SITES

Nearly one hundred and thirty-seven (137) non-compliant mining companies were formally brought before the courts, and their case files were forwarded to the competent prosecution services. The enforcement action produced the expected effect. To date, more than half of these unlawful companies have agreed to pay the fines of thirty-seven million (37,000,000) CFA francs imposed on each company. Once these fines have been paid in full, the process of regularising the companies concerned will begin, while complying with the legal requirement to place Cameroonian nationals at the centre of the activity.

D- WITHDRAWAL OF SEMI-MECHANISED MINING AUTHORISATIONS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH LEGAL AND TAX REQUIREMENTS

As a first step, all semi-mechanised artisanal mining authorisations were withdrawn and operators were invited to comply with the new requirements. To date, about thirty companies have submitted the documents required for their regularisation. These documents are being reviewed by the Interministerial Commission for the Examination of Applications for Mining Rights and Authorisations, established by the Prime Minister, Head of Government.

E - WITHDRAWAL OF EXPLORATION PERMITS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO ILLEGAL SEMI-MECHANISED ACTIVITIES

Exploration permits are granted for investigative work that may lead to the discovery of an economically exploitable gold deposit. However, the situation is clear: permit holders have been selling portions of their permit areas to semi-mechanised operators or engaging in semi-mechanised mining activities themselves.

This is contrary to the law and to the purpose of an exploration permit. It has resulted in the illegal establishment of semi-mechanised operators without the approval of the Ministry responsible for Mines, hence the withdrawal of all gold exploration permits.

Exploration permits must genuinely be used for exploration activities aimed at identifying gold deposits that may be developed through industrial mining, where monitoring of the State's share is easier.

It should be noted that, until now, the management of exploration permits involved a degree of administrative tolerance, with the aim of enabling more Cameroonians to participate and find strategic partners to develop exploration. However, the purpose of the permits granted was distorted, leading to the sale of areas to third parties for unauthorised activities and the fraudulent establishment of certain operators.

F - ***PROPOSED TAX REASSESSMENT BY THE DGI FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF UNCOLLECTED GOLD FROM LEACHING PONDS***

As part of this clean-up operation, a specialised Task Force comprising six (06) teams was established by the Minister responsible for Mines. Field investigations carried out by the exploration and production-threshold assessment team, which monitors drilling work on sites covered by applications for semi-mechanised artisanal mining authorisations in order to determine average grade and the minimum production threshold, revealed major shortcomings in the current gold declaration and collection system.

In particular, primary artisanal gold production takes place in two stages: an initial physical crushing stage that recovers less than 30% of the gold contained in the ore, followed by a chemical stage, notably cyanidation and leaching, which recovers more than 90% of the remaining gold. However, the current control and collection mechanisms used by the National Mining Corporation (SONAMINES) essentially cover only the first stage, creating a major traceability gap and contributing to discrepancies between quantities declared and quantities actually produced and exported.

Field missions identified fifty-one (51) installations, including thirty-three (33) with large-capacity ponds capable of processing up to three hundred thousand (300,000) tonnes of mineralised gravel per cycle. The Task Force analysed all these data, and yesterday, 14 July 2026, MINMIDT held a meeting with the Directors General of Taxation, Customs and the Treasury, as well as the Director General of SONAMINES, to share the information and agree on a strategy for recovering the gold due to the State. Tax and customs reassessments will therefore be carried out, enabling the State to recover at least eighty billion CFA francs from 2025 production. The same amount is also expected in respect of the first half of 2026, and approximately three hundred billion CFA francs for the whole of 2026. Field deployments to operators of these leaching ponds will begin on 1 August.

Similarly, the meeting with the Directors General from the Ministry of Finance and SONAMINES made it possible to review the collection system. From now on, a joint SONAMINES/DGI/DGD team will monitor production sites and collect taxes in the field. An international expert will assist the State with the scientific assessment and calculation of the expected production from each site and leaching pond. MINMIDT will continue to perform its sovereign functions of oversight and strategic guidance in order to control production and ensure gold traceability.

G - SOURCE OF THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN DECLARED AND EXPORTED QUANTITIES

Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion,

It must be unanimously acknowledged that the loss of revenue stems from shortcomings in the gold collection system, since duties and taxes are calculated on the quantities collected at source, as required by law. Because gold produced in Cameroon comes largely from semi-mechanised activities, revenue is lost when substantial quantities escape collection and, consequently, the related taxes are not deducted at source as required.

Three corrective measures are proposed to address this situation:

1- A much more rigorous collection system must be established, taking into account every stage of gold extraction, both physical and chemical. In addition, the General Directorates of Customs and Taxation, which have acknowledged this weakness, must become more actively involved so that collection is more visible and substantial. Under the current system, 80% to 90% of the gold produced is not collected;
2- SONAMINES must reconcile its figures with those of the General Directorate of Customs every month. In this way, Cameroon will be able to publish its own annual figures on gold production and exports without waiting for the EITI to make them public;
3- From now on, exports should be initiated directly by the two institutions—SONAMINES and the General Directorate of Customs.

H - TECHNICAL COMPONENTS OF THE RESTRUCTURING PROCESS

To restore lasting order in the semi-mechanised artisanal mining sector, the State is deploying a rigorous framework underpinned by the new Mining Code and structured around the following technical and environmental obligations:

Environmental Safeguard: Payment of a mandatory environmental protection bond of sixty-three million CFA francs (63,000,000 CFA francs) per site, to be held in escrow and refunded only after it has been confirmed that the site has been fully rehabilitated.

Cameroonian Majority Ownership of Licences: Strict compliance with the legal provisions requiring at least 51% of the share capital of companies applying for semi-mechanised mining authorisations to be held by a Cameroonian national.

Fiscal Discipline: Non-negotiable rates of 25% for the final mining composite tax, 5% for export duties, and 1% for the fund used to implement the national mining policy.

Mandatory Minimum Production Threshold: Contractual monthly delivery quotas will be set at 5 kg per month for sites equipped with 15 sluice boxes, 7 kg per month for 20 sluice boxes, and 10 kg per month for 30 sluice boxes, for recovery through the washing system (physical method). For leaching ponds, the threshold will be calculated at 1.5 g per tonne multiplied by the number of tonnes processed. It should be emphasised that the stated minimum production threshold is the minimum requirement for access to semi-mechanised mining. However, each site will be subject to studies and grade assessments.

Technological Innovation—Leaching System and Closed-Vessel System: All operators will be required, within six months, to migrate to a closed-vessel system for processing mineralised gravel. This system increases extraction recovery to more than 90% and guarantees full transparency. In the meantime, the basic minimum system will apply. Under the closed-vessel system, the opening of the vessel and verification of actual production are conducted jointly in the presence of State officials, making any concealment of gold impossible.

The Objective: Development of Industrial Gold Mining as the Definitive Solution.

3. RESULTS ALREADY ACHIEVED AND PROJECTED OUTCOMES

These reforms are already producing measurable results in terms of immediate revenue:

1- Expected proceeds from the fines payable are estimated at five point eight billion (5,800,000,000) CFA francs;

2- An environmental fund of **three billion one hundred and fifty million (3,150,000,000) CFA francs for 50 companies**, of which 2.2 billion CFA francs has already been collected, with the objective of securing payment from 100 companies for a total of **6.3 billion CFA francs**;

3- Tax and customs reassessments to be pursued by the DGI and DGD for the 2025 financial year, amounting immediately to ninety-five billion CFA francs in respect of thirty-three (33) leaching ponds, and three hundred billion CFA francs for the 2026 financial year;

4- In the short term, the projected minimum threshold for the other companies (alluvial operators) is estimated at no less than sixty-seven billion five hundred million (**67,500,000,000**) CFA francs.

In the short term: With the formalisation of 100 compliant operators, declared production will rise to 16 tonnes per year, generating 368 billion CFA francs in direct revenue for the Public Treasury.

In the long term: Bringing 200 operators into compliance will increase declared production to 30 tonnes per year, generating a historic flow of 690 billion CFA francs in direct tax revenue.

FINAL OBJECTIVE: Commissioning of industrial gold mining, based on projected reserves of more than 100 tonnes.

C - CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion,

With regard to the discrepancies in the gold sector, the issue lies in the quantities declared and collected, since specific taxes and export taxes are levied at production sites. This system has shown its limitations, as collection is based on understated declarations representing barely 10% of actual production.

The proposed restructuring therefore seeks to control production and collect all amounts due to the State, so that regardless of who exports the gold, the State will already have recovered all the sums due to it, representing approximately 30% of total production.

To this end, the Government intends to initiate the recruitment of an independent expert who will determine the expected production of each site, on the basis of which the amounts due will be assessed.

- Furthermore, Cameroon currently holds approximately 1,500 kg of gold reserves lodged with the Ministry of Finance. Only if part of these reserves were to go missing could one speak of a loss of gold for Cameroon. The discrepancy between declarations and exports identified by the EITI does not constitute a loss of gold; rather, it represents a significant loss of revenue from export taxes and the composite tax. This is why MINMIDT is implementing the minimum production threshold to address under-declaration.
- **With the reassessment measures that will begin on 1 August through the planned joint Customs–Taxation–SONAMINES field operations, the State will start generating substantial revenue from 2026, estimated at approximately three hundred billion CFA francs per year.**
- **It is through reforms of this nature that Ghana and Mali became Africa's leading gold producers, ahead of South Africa. By following the same path, Cameroon will take its rightful place as a major gold producer in Africa.**

Overall, in the medium and long term, the ten (10) major mining projects under way, the restructuring of the gold sector, and the planned exploitation of rare earth elements and critical minerals will raise the mining sector's contribution to the Public Treasury to more than two thousand (2,000) billion CFA francs per year.

Thank you for your kind attention. Together with the Minister of Communication, I remain available to provide further clarification on these matters of major importance to our country. /-