**Text of Press Conference Address by Y. Z. Ya’u, Executive Director, CITAD on Tuesday, 20th August 2019 at CITAD’S Office, Kano**

**Introduction**

Gentle men of the press, I welcome you to this press conference on an important issue that has serious security implications for the country which is the continued closure of mines and banning of all mining activities in Kebbi State.

**The Issues**

CITAD has undertaken a research on mining in Kebbi State. As of 2017, there were over 142 licenses issued for different minerals, however much of the mining is done by artisanal miners while most of the title holders are not mining. Gold, iron ore, copper, aquamarine, Beryl, Manganese, Gypsum, coal, Lithium, Limestone, Kaoline, Bentonite, Silver, Lead/Zinc, Tourmaline, Granite,Gemstone, Mica, Cassiterite and Topaz. Data from the Cadastral office indicate that various mining titles have been issued in 17 out of the 21 local governments of the state.

Gold which was the focus of our research is found in commercial deposit in 12 local government areas of the state for which titles have been awarded. As at 2017, there were 63 gold mining titles across the state (Cadastral Office, 2017). Many of these licenses are prospecting titles, not actual mining. Indeed, by 2016, NEITI Report indicates that there was a total of 69 valid mineral titles in Kebbi State, out of which 43 were for exploration and only 19 were for small scale mining (NEITI, 2016: 32).

We studied three mining sites intensely namely MarrarabarYauri, Makerin both in Ngaski Local Government and Tungan Zakara in Shamga Local Government of the State.In these three sites, there are about 20,000 people making a living directly on mining. These are just three sites. If we take a crudeestimate that a site has on average 6500 people, and that each of the local governmentswhereminingtakesplace has on average two sites, this will mean looking at 24 mining sites in the state, givingemployment to about 156,000 people in the state. Thisconservative estimate does includethose who make a livingindirectly such as transporters of mining products, food vendors, traders, etc.

This means that a substantial number of people of the state are employed in mining and earntheir means of livelihoodthrough it. It can in fact be said that mining is the single largest employer of labour in the state.

Following the escalation of violence in nearby Zamfara state and the allegation that illegal mining was responding for the violence, the InspectionGeneral of Police,without consultation with stakeholders in thestate ordered all mines to be closed and banned all mining activities. Sincethe ban at least 17 miners have been detained and are facing charge of illegal miningbefore a Kebbi Court. By a stroke of the pen and with no consultation with the stakeholders, no thought about an alternative means of livelihood for those affected and without any iota of justification, the Police deprived thesethousands of people their means of livelihood and make them unemployed overnight.

**The Implications**

Already out of desperation, community leaders as well as the policiesinthe mining areas have seen a rise in petty the theft. as many more become press, these will escalate and likely to graduate from mere petty theft to robbery and armed confrontation. This will lead to violence.

This has serious security implication. Illegal mining is said to be a contributing factor to the conflict in Zamfara State. If this is not quickly addressed, the possibility of illegal mining turning into violent confrontation especially between illegal miners and the police and security agencies is high. The logic is simple. Miners are dependent on mining for their livelihood. While in MararrabarYauri, and Makerin they have farms and community to fallback to and there is community structure that may exert some measure of acceptable conduct, in Tungan Zakara, there are no such fall back facilities and structure. As people become more desperate, they can become more engaged in illegal mining. The police could become more repressive as their conduct in TungarZakara has shown. In Tungan Zakara, they razed done the dwelling and all other structures in the mining camp. Now desperate miners could react to increased repression with counter force. In the process, it is not inconceivable that they could come into contact with sources of light weapons and the rest will be the rooting of conflict that with time with go beyond confrontation with between miners and police but will also involve the communities as miners with weapon could become bandits.

Comparing the dynamics in Zamfara State and the closure of the mines in Kebbi State, it is clear that criminality and violence are not due to the nature of mining but by the way in which government manufacture “illegal mining”, there are two ways in which illegal mining is produced. The first is when conditions for registration by artisanal miners are made difficult for artisanal miners to access and acquire licenses. The second is when government closes mines and make mining activities illegal without consultation and not provide for provide alternative means of livelihood for those dependent on mining activities for their livelihood and then use the police to repress any effort by the miners to disregard such an arbitrary decision, this reproduction of illegality by people legitimately registered or licensed to carry out mining is met with violence from police, they resort to self-help and counter with violence. Illegal mining is therefore not the source of violence as some researchers tend to portray (SPD, 2019), rather it is the action of itgovernment and its agencies that creates and generate the conditions for violence to catalyze

It is clear that it is government that manufacture illegal mining and then police action to impose this definition of illegal mining generates a dynamic of violence as communities of miners who have losttheir means of livelihood response in self-help to the repression and atrocities of police. As it is now, without any alternativemeans of livelihood, when miners out of desperation in Kebbi begin to ignore the ban order, they will be met with police violence.This has alreadyhappened when the police razed to the ground all shelters/houses, stores,shops, facilities and equipment of the miners in Tungan Zakara.

**Recommendations**

We call for the immediate lifting of the ban on mining and opening of the mines in the state so that the ordinary citizens can have their means of livelihood restored. In addition to this, we call on government to commit to implementation the provisions for the Mining Act of 20107 as well as the Minerals and Metals Policy of the Same year. In particular:

1. Government should ensure that all relevant departments of the Ministry of Mines are positioned to carry out their mandates, particularly the mines inspectorate department that shroud ensure regular mines inspection to make sure that mining is done under safely and that miners and their communities are not exposed to poisonous hazards
2. Make the of small scale and artisanal mining department carry out the functions for which it was established as contained in the policy. In particular, it should provide training, support, and equipment for artisanal miners and also support infrastructure deployment in mining communities
3. Make the environmental protection and rehabilitation functional so that it can help in transforming mining operations
4. Establishing less cumbersome processes and procedures for licenses artisanal miners, including ceding this to state level agency such as the Mineral Resources and Environmental Committee so as to bring the process closer to the miner. Also clarify within policy instruments the terms artisanal mining and “Illegal Mining”. Often actors, including researchers tend to use the two interchangeably. And this has a way of under-recognizing the contribution to Artisanal mining to the economic growth of the country
5. Establish mechanism, structures and processes for ensuring that mining products are accurately captured and recorded and sales including export are properly reported so that there would be accountability and Improved transparency
6. There is need for regular and comprehensive assessment of quality of environment and water sources of mining communities to ensure early detection of possible contamination so as to take measures to prevent disaster from striking,
7. While it is good to promote mining, it is important to do this bearing in mind that it is likely to impact on farming and food security.
8. Deepening of the process of mainstreaming of the NEITI principles in the mining sector