

PRESS STATEMENT FOR THE MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, HON. EMMANUEL ARMAH-KOFI BUAH, MP (ELLEMBELLE)

REVIEW OF THE LEASE OF PUBLIC LANDS

Deputy Minister,

Chief Director,

Members of the Committee to Review the Leases of Public Lands,

Directors,

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It is with great honour and a deep sense of national duty that I welcome you all to this important press conference. Today's engagement marks a critical milestone in our collective efforts to strengthen integrity, transparency, and accountability in the administration of public lands, which are held in trust for the people of Ghana.

As you may recall, on 10th January 2025, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, directed the Lands Commission to immediately halt all activities relating to the lease and processing of transactions involving public lands. This decisive intervention was taken to safeguard public lands from abuse, restore discipline in land administration, and ensure that all transactions involving these lands deliver value for money to the State.

In line with this directive, and consistent with the Government's Resetting Agenda, I constituted and inaugurated a Committee chaired by my Deputy Minister to review the lease of Public Lands on Thursday, 5th June 2025. The establishment of this Committee underscored Government's firm commitment to restoring public confidence in land administration and ensuring that public lands are managed with integrity, efficiency, and in the best interest of national development.

The Committee undertook a comprehensive review of public land allocations and leases across the country. Upon the completion of its work, I submitted the Committee's findings and recommendations to Cabinet for the consideration of His Excellency the President and his distinguished Cabinet Ministers.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to announce that Cabinet approved the recommendations of the Committee and directed their immediate implementation.

In the course of its work, the Committee reviewed a total of 8,160 lease applications executed or initiated between 2017 and 2024 across all sixteen regions of Ghana. These applications comprised:

1. 4,176 Direct Allocations
2. 2,799 Regularizations
3. 19 Direct Allocations relating to State Bungalows
4. 108 Land Swap or Public-Private Partnership arrangements
5. 795 Subsequent Transactions
6. 263 Fresh Allocations

The review revealed that a number of these applications and allocations did not fully comply with the Lands Commission's internal procedures for the allocation of public lands. These lapses undermined transparency, accountability, and public trust, and exposed the system to potential abuse.

To address these issues decisively and restore accountability, the following measures have been implemented:

- All uncompleted transactions of the categories listed above have been cancelled, and affected applicants will be formally notified.
- Completed transactions of the categories listed above will undergo case-by-case review, and any allocation found to have been processed without full compliance with due process will be cancelled.
- All uncompleted regularization applications will remain suspended pending a comprehensive review and standardization of the Lands Commission's internal

procedures. The revised procedures will apply to all pending and future regularizations.

For the avoidance of doubt, and to ensure consistency in implementation, a transaction will be treated as completed where a formal offer has been issued and accepted by the applicant, and transactions that do not meet this threshold will be treated as uncompleted for the purposes of this exercise.

In the interest of transparency, both completed and uncompleted application lists will be published on a region-by-region basis, beginning with the Greater Accra Region on the Ministry and the Lands Commission website.

Completed transactions that fall for case-by-case review will be assessed against clear benchmarks. These include compliance with the statutory and administrative procedures for public land allocation, value for money, conformity with land use and planning requirements, and enhanced disclosure to prevent the misuse of corporate structures in public land applications.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me emphasize that these measures are not intended to unfairly disadvantage anyone. All affected applicants will be given the opportunity to reapply once the Ministry completes the following reforms.

REFORMS

1. Review of the Public Land Application Form (Form 5)

- One of the major findings of the Committee was the inconsistent application of the Public Land Application Form across the Regional Lands Commissions. This lack of uniformity resulted in discretionary practices and uneven standards in the allocation of public lands, thereby weakening transparency and accountability.
- To address this, the Ministry in collaboration with the Lands Commission has completed a comprehensive revision of Form 5. The revised form will now serve as the single mandatory application instrument for all public land transactions nationwide, covering both re-applications arising from this exercise and all future applications.
- The revised Form 5 will be published on the Lands Commission's official website and made available for public access within the coming weeks. Applicants will be able to download, complete, and submit the form electronically.

2. Review of Lands Commission Internal Processes for Public Land Allocation

- The Committee also observed inconsistencies and weak enforcement of the Lands Commission's internal procedures for the allocation of public lands. These procedural gaps created opportunities for abuse, circumvention of controls, and the processing of allocations without full compliance with established rules.
- In response, the Ministry has undertaken a comprehensive review of the Lands Commission's internal processes for public land allocation. The revised process clearly defines the stages of processing public land applications, strengthens internal checks, and aligns each stage of decision-making with the principles of transparency, accountability, and traceability.
- Under the revised framework, no public land will be allocated by the Lands Commission without the prior written approval of the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources. This measure reinforces ministerial oversight, ensures policy coherence, and provides an additional safeguard against unauthorized or irregular allocations.

3. Legislating Public Land Application Reforms

- To ensure sustainability and prevent a reversion to past practices, Government has taken steps to provide legislative backing for these reforms. The revised Public Land Application Form and the restructured internal allocation processes will be incorporated into the draft Land Regulation, which is currently undergoing review.

4. Revision of Public Land Premiums

- Ladies and Gentlemen, another critical issue identified by the Committee relates to the valuation and pricing of public lands. Over the years, premiums charged for the lease of public lands have ranged from approximately 1 to 30 per cent of market value. This practice has significantly undervalued public lands and failed to deliver value for money to the State.
- The Ministry, in consultation with the Lands Commission, has therefore proposed a new premium framework for public land leases. Under this framework, a minimum of 70 per cent of the assessed market value of public land will be payable upfront as a premium, with the remaining 30 per cent structured over the tenure of the lease as ground rent.

- Pursuant to Section 235, Subsection 4 of the Land Act 2020, (Act 1036), State Institutions that are beneficiaries of public lands are being reminded that the allocations confer on them only user rights without the power to transact any business relating to those lands without prior written approval of the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources.

5. Compilation of Market Value Data for Defined Land Clusters

- To support transparent pricing and informed decision-making, the Ministry, working with the Lands Commission, will compile and maintain reliable data on market values for defined land clusters across the country. These values will be published on the website of the Lands Commission in the spirit of transparency.
- This data will serve as a reference point for assessing premiums, evaluating value for money, and supporting consistent and objective decision-making in public land allocations. It will also enhance predictability and fairness in the system and reduce opportunities for arbitrary valuations.

6. Establishment of a Public Land Protection Task Force

- During this transition and reform implementation period, the Ministry in collaboration with the Lands Commission, will establish a Public Land Protection Task Force to safeguard public lands affected by this exercise.
- The Task Force will operate within the framework of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the Lands Commission Act, 2008 (Act 767), the Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036), and all applicable criminal laws relating to trespass, unlawful entry, and illegal development.
- The Task Force will comprise personnel from:

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources,

The Ministry of Works, Housing and Water Resources,

The Lands Commission,

The Ghana Police Service and allied Security Services, and

A selected private sector stakeholder with relevant technical expertise.

- The mandate of the task force will include preventing encroachment, halting unauthorized developments, and ensuring that public lands under review are protected from illegal occupation and development.

I am also pleased to clarify, for the avoidance of doubt, that the temporary ban on the services of the Lands Commission, including the leasing, processing, and regularization of public lands, has now been lifted. All activities may resume immediately, but strictly in accordance with the new reforms and procedures announced today. This ensures that every transaction going forward will adhere to the principles of transparency, accountability, and value for money, while safeguarding the interests of both the State and legitimate applicants.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to conclude this press statement, I want to emphasize:

Public lands are vested in the President in trust for the people of Ghana to be administered in the public interest. They are meant to serve national development objectives, support public infrastructure, and promote equitable access to land. It is therefore our solemn responsibility to safeguard these lands from mismanagement, misuse, and unauthorized disposals.

I wish to assure the people of Ghana that the Government remains fully committed to reforming and decentralizing land administration in Ghana.

The Ministry has secured 100% retention of Lands Commission's Internally Generated Funds out of which 67% will be used for the funding of the Land Bank & Digitalisation Project. This initiative will serve as a catalyst to restore public confidence, and ensure that public lands are managed transparently, responsibly, and for the benefit of present and future generations.

Thank you for your attention.