

## **Transcript of the Interview of His Excellency Lamine Seydou Traore, Minister of Mines, Energy and Water of Mali**

**Interviewer:** Mali National TV Chanel (ORTM)

**Date of Interview:** 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021

**Background:** The Minister visited the Morila Gold Mine, on 1 February 2021, to attend the Morila SA Board Meeting, Visit the mine infrastructure and Visit Local Communities.

**Reporter:**

Hello Minister

**Minister:**

Hello

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Why are you present today at Morila? Could you give us the reasons for your visit?

**Minister:**

Today's visit to Morila has two reasons.

The primary reason is to attend the Board Meeting, focused on end of year 2020 activities review for Firefinch, which is the company that took over the Morila gold mine to avoid its closure.

The second reason is that because of this takeover by the company Firefinch, we are in the process of saving more than 500 direct jobs and nearly 2,000 indirect jobs. In this context, it was important for us to come and inquire about the implementation of this new development to the benefit of the neighbouring populations, and to the benefit of the Malian population at large.

**Reporter:**

What are your impressions after visiting the mine infrastructure?

**Minister:**

The establishment of a mine requires significant investments. But, beyond the investments for gold production, it is particularly important to develop the communities where these sites are located.

Our visit to the fishponds, as well as other infrastructures of the kind, comfort us and show us that this mine is in line with the policy of the Transitional Government, whose guideline was given by the President of the Transition, who wants gold to shine brighter for the Malian populations. And, to achieve this, it is necessary to insist on this local development aspect, and I can see that Firefinch is working on it.

It was also important for us to see what is going on, how it is going, and to be able to provide advice and warnings. The warning relates in particular to the continued implementation of local

content, as well as to urge the company to strengthen its cooperation with Malian economic operators.

We were pleasantly surprised to find that this is the leitmotif of the Firefinch group, which today has clearly shown us that out of 500 employees, there are only 4 expatriates, and this is encouraging.

The company has also shared with us the challenges it faces at the present time, and with my other government counterparts, we will work to ensure that these challenges are addressed.

And all this is to the advantage of the Malian people because the investors present in-country, and who invest several billion in Mali, must be reassured. By reassuring those present, it will stimulate the arrival of other investors.

The Malian mining sector is very rich in resources. But for these resources to be properly exploited, we need investors, investments, whether national or international. But above all, it is necessary that all these investors join hands to advance this particularly important sector for our country.

**Reporter:**

You attended the Morila SA Board Meeting. Do you have any thoughts?

**Minister:**

It turns out that the signals are good.

The initial projections for Morila's closure for June 2021 were likely to unbalance the financial accounts somewhat.

So, we end up with a company facing losses, but investors relentlessly committed to ensuring that jobs are preserved and that the mine can continue to operate.

This shows that these investors agree to make their financial resources available to give new life to the mine. And, the elements presented this morning show that with the support of the government, with the support of the population, and with the commitment of investors, we will succeed in making Morila's gold shine again for the happiness of Malians.

**Reporter:**

Minister, do you have anything else to add?

**Minister:**

My final words would be to convey thanks, especially to the workers at the Morila gold mine, who have been hit by covid-19, including declining production. Some have found themselves unemployed because of technical or economic reasons. But the recovery is taking place slowly. It is therefore a matter of inviting them to remain patient, to work together with the new investors.

I would also like to thank the populations of the rural commune of Sanso, and the entire Bougouni region for their involvement and especially their good collaboration with the mining company and reassure the population and the company that the Transition Government will continue its efforts to make life easier for our fellow citizens.