

**Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development
Annual General Meeting
October 27–29, 2015
Room XXVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland**

Communiqué

Integrating sustainable development into mining activities remains a major challenge. Given its significant role in local livelihoods, national economies and the global market, better align the practices and policies of the mining industry with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be a key part of successfully achieving the global development agenda between now and 2030. The Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF), as the leading global policy forum on mining and sustainable development, has an important role to play in this alignment.

From October 27 to 29, 2015, the IGF convened its 11th Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The AGM was held in conjunction with three side workshops. On October 26, IGF held two workshops on the topics of “Designing of closure with community engagement” and “Introduction to the Mining Policy Framework.” On October 30, IGF also held a workshop providing guidance for governments on managing artisanal and small-scale mining.

This year’s AGM was attended by over 250 participants from 67 countries, as well as representatives from international organizations, industry associations and civil society organizations. At the meeting, delegates welcomed five new members to the IGF: France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Rwanda. This brings the total number of IGF member countries to 54.

The Chair of the IGF, Mr. Glenn Gemerts of Suriname, noted that the three-day meeting covered a range of important issues, including mine closure practices and challenges; the social impacts of mine closure; and the emergence of a growing number of guidelines, standards, and certification schemes to guide the closure process. Mr. Gemerts noted that “the vast majority of speakers, regardless of whether they represent government, civil society, academia or the private sector, agree on the need to begin mine closure planning as soon as processes for planning the mine commence. There was an extraordinary level of consistency between all stakeholder groups in this regard.” The Chair also stressed that discussions rightly acknowledged the importance of going beyond environmental considerations to include socioeconomic considerations into closure and post-closure planning.

The Chair thanked UNCTAD and donor countries – including Canada and Germany - for their support of the IGF and its members. Noting that mining activities have the potential to significantly contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, he reiterated that the IGF is committed to providing a forum for examining how these contributions can take place, and that the Forum will work hand-in-hand with governments to ensure that mining contributes positively to the achievement of the SDGs.

In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Samuel Gayi, Head of the Special Unit on Commodities of UNCTAD, recognized the contribution of the extractive industry to sustainable development



as well as the IGF's significant role in improving governance in the sector. He acknowledged the Forum's key inputs on establishing best practices in mining and on enhancing the capacities of developing countries to address the challenges that accompany the exploitation of natural resources. He acknowledged the IGF's contribution to the global debate on policies that improve mineral exploitation, development and production activities in support of host countries' economic growth and sustainable development. He expressed UNCTAD's interest in further strengthening cooperation with the IGF, particularly in establishing common ground for various stakeholders to address similar problems in the post-mining transition.

Assessment Findings

Among the major achievements of the IGF during the past year, pilot country assessments to implement the guidance laid out in the IGF's Mining Policy Framework (MPF) were successfully completed. The assessments, carried out in the Dominican Republic, Uganda and Madagascar, reviewed each country's mining laws and policies and identified where strengths, weaknesses and gaps lay for each of the six pillars of the MPF. In addition, an analysis of the contribution of the mining sector in Suriname to local Water-Energy-Food (WEF) security was also successfully completed, and a corresponding tool was developed to replicate the analysis in other mining regions and countries. IISD provided an overview of the findings from each project, highlighting key priorities for the IGF moving forward.

The Post-Mining Transition and Environmental Management

Discussions during this year's AGM focused on the theme of the post-mining transition and environmental management. As noted, participants agreed on the importance of integrating social and economic considerations into closure plans, as well as the necessity of starting mine closure planning as soon as the process of designing a mine begins. Participants identified the most pressing social and environmental challenges relating to mine closure and post-closure transitions, including the insufficiency of knowledge and the absence of considerations for this issue in many investment discussions. It was noted that mine closure planning should be a prerequisite to mining investment, and that adequate financial resources should be in place to ensure that the costs associated with closure are covered.

Examples of successful closure and post-mining transition policies and laws were described, as were the challenges associated with rehabilitating orphaned and abandoned mines. Emphasis was placed on the importance of: enhancing partnerships and collaborations among different sectors; early stage community engagement; increasing transparency; the social license to operate; and providing capacity building to integrate economic, social and environmental aspects throughout the mine's life cycle. In addition, participants acknowledged the contributions of international organizations in developing relevant and useful guidance and standards across the mining life cycle.

Mine closure is a complex process, with plans evolving over time to reflect changes in the operating context that occur over the life cycle of the mine. Community engagement in the process is increasingly essential; these communities should be involved in the design and implementation of closure plans for these plans to be viable in the long run and to ensure that there is lasting value coming out of the mine that extends beyond operations themselves.



Elections

By the unanimous consent of the members, Mr. Glenn Gemerts of Surinam was re-elected to the position of the IGF Chair. Following countries were elected to represent members in the Executive Committee: Canada, the Dominican Republic, Germany, the Republic of Ghana, and the Russian Federation. All these elected positions are serving a term of two years.

In closing, the IGF Chair thanked delegates for their participation and UNCTAD for its invitation to hold the next AGM in Geneva in late 2016. The dates for the meeting will be coordinated with the UNCTAD Secretariat in early 2016, and will be communicated to all stakeholders as soon as they are finalized.

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