



The Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development

PRESS RELEASE

On September 19, 2007, the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Metals, and Sustainable Development concluded its three day Annual General Meeting at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, hosted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The meeting was opened by the UNCTAD Secretary General Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, who noted that “the mineral sector can make a major contribution to national economic development and poverty reduction”. Since last year, a number of members indicated they had put into effect policies and practices as a result of their engagement in the Forum.

This year’s meeting focussed on the policies and practices by governments and industry in better ensuring the optimization of benefits derived from mining both at the community and national levels. Benefits discussed ranged from downstream processing opportunities to the contribution of industries that provide services, equipment and other supplies to ensure the efficient operation of mining facilities. The contribution of industry to infrastructure, schools and hospitals, among other facilities, was highlighted, notably in remote areas where mining normally occurs. However, it was understood that such policies had to be responsive to the country’s circumstances, legal framework, culture, values, history, needs and institutional structures. The Forum discussed approaches for community understanding and participation in mine developments and the value of verification of outcomes.

With the demand for minerals likely to significantly exceed supply in the medium term, the Forum recommended that intergovernmental agencies, e.g., World Bank, IMF, among others, assign higher priority and continue to develop new incentives to support geological surveys and exploration activities, particularly in developing countries. However, the Forum expressed concern that exploration and subsequent mining activity need to be carried out in a manner that ensures that the longer term socio-economic benefits exceed the costs to society and that this can better be assured through companies adhering to strict requirements of corporate social responsibility guidelines. Moreover, intergovernmental agencies and supportive industrialized countries should implement policies and programs that support capacity building, the creation of supplier and downstream industries related to mining. Finally, community relations and the integration of community with national benefits were noted to be of critical importance to improvements in standards of living.

Members decided to begin assessing progress in the application of sustainable development mining practices in their respective countries as it pertains to the priorities outlined in the Plan of Implementation agreed at the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in Johannesburg. These preparations will allow an effective contribution by member governments at the upcoming United Nations meeting planned for 2010/11 at which time, mining will be on the agenda for discussion. This event further acknowledges the significant attention now being given to raw materials as a key factor in sustainable development.



Members also focussed on issues related to market access. In particular, they expressed concern about the use of environmental and health issues as unjustified or unnecessary barriers to trade of minerals, metals or their downstream products.

Forum members agreed that a key theme for the next meeting would be on fiscal regimes, notably as it pertains to investment decisions, revenue sharing, mine closures, and abandoned mines. Good governance and the generation and optimization of community and national benefits derived from minerals resources remain the overall concern of the Forum.

This year, Forum members welcomed India and Botswana as members bringing membership to 38 national governments. Other members include Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Republic of Guinea, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, South Africa, Suriname, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Uruguay, United Kingdom and Zambia. The European Commission, Germany, and multilateral agencies (UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNEP, ILO, World Bank and the Metals Study Groups) attended as observers.

The Forum acknowledged the financial support from a number of donors, namely United Kingdom Department for International Development, Natural Resources Canada, German Department of Economic Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada.

The Forum, which was established in 2005 as a result of a proposal put forward at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, held elections for a new Executive Committee.

For Further information, please contact:

Gary Nash,
Assistant Deputy Minister & Senior Advisor,
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada,
125 Sussex Drive,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1A 0G2
Tel: 613-943-0912
E-mail: gary.nash@international.gc.ca

Olle Ostensson
Chief, Diversification and
Natural Resources Section
Commodities Branch
UNCTAD, Switzerland
Tel: 41 22 917-57 61
E-mail: Olle.Ostensson@unctad.org

Secretariat of the Forum
André Bourassa, Secretary
Tel: (613) 992-3834; Fax: (613) 992-5244
E-mail: abourass@nrcan.gc.ca
Natural Resources Canada, 10th Floor,
580 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E4
Government of Canada