

# FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*GENEVA, 1-2 December 2009*

## **Agenda item 8. Mining**

Intervention by the Swedish Presidency of the European Union<sup>1</sup>



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### **Swedish Presidency of the European Union**

Minerals and metals are essential for modern living. Raw materials are crucial for the sustainable functioning of modern societies. Access to and affordability of mineral raw materials are vital for the sound functioning of the world economy. Mine operations have an enormous potential to create, contribute to and support sustainable development.

At the same time it is of vital importance to find new solutions to do more with less, to increase the wealth and welfare of people and put less pressure on eco-systems. Access to raw materials could be more limited in the future and therefore it will be necessary to minimise the waste generated and increase recycling and reuse of resources to produce raw materials and products.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation contains targets and timetables to spur actions to fight poverty and protect the environment. It acknowledges the importance of mining, minerals and metals to economic and social development and proposes specific actions to enhance the contribution of these to sustainable development.

**The EU has made progress internally and wishes to contribute to progress internationally, addressing complex and unfolding issues.**

In fostering sustainable mining practices, the EU has developed a number of best practices and learnt several lessons. Progress has been made in Europe in the following key areas:

- Increased resource efficiency, reuse and recycling;
- Good Governance;
- Management of Tailings and Waste-Rock in Mining Activities;
- Rehabilitation of abandoned mines and orphaned sites; and
- Health and Safety – Protection of workers.

This concern has resulted in different European measures, such as the biodiversity action plan, the framework of Natura 2000 and the directive on management of waste from extractive industries. This includes also the reference documents on the best available techniques for the management of mining waste facilities. We hope that these can serve as good examples for our cooperation on the global agenda.

However, EU recognises that, both internally and at international level, some issues remain to be addressed and/or remain to be implemented. Some of these are:

- Corporate social responsibility (CSR) for corporate self-regulation is used within and between companies in, for instance, supply chain management. It is fundamental that governments recognise that they have a crucial stewardship role in rising CSR standards in the extractive industry.
- Improvement of governance in the mining sector to ensure that natural resources contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication, through initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).
- For rehabilitation of abandoned mines and orphaned sites guidance is required.
- In some developing countries, new legislation is required and best practice needs to be established and implemented.
- The reduction of methane hazard in coal mines is necessary. Efficient regulation and better understanding of methane migration through geological formations deserve serious consideration.
- A guidance document on extractive industries and Natura 2000 is being developed by the Commission. The aim of the document is to provide guidance pertaining to mineral extraction in order to ensure that extractive activities are allowed to proceed where possible in a way that is compatible with the conservation of biodiversity and the implementation of the Natura 2000 network.
- The issues on Biodiversity in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (specifically point 44 a) remain to be implemented.

There are many constraints preventing the rapid achievement of the objectives of Agenda 21, such as:

- Governments need to develop and enhance interaction with and regulation of the mining industry.
- Weak national institutions with poor technical and financial capacity, low levels of research and scientific capacity, low access to appropriate and efficient technology and poor understanding of natural resources issues constrain the sustainable management of the natural resource base.
- There is a need for development of effective and efficient approaches to the funding of closure.

- Distributing benefits, policies, legal and regulatory frameworks to facilitate equitable participation by local businesses, communities, women and other stakeholders in mining activities and significant change in the way that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is adopted, implemented and regulated in the national mining jurisdictions, is required.
- To build the ecosystems dimension. Biodiversity and ecosystem services remain undervalued or not valued at all. Impacts should be assessed and taken into account when planning mining activities.

Having regard to the objectives of Agenda 21, the targets and timetables of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the EU overall objective on the sustainable use of natural resources and the current policy stated in the “The Raw materials initiative”, the EU wishes to:

- Work with governments that seek to promote sustainable economic and social development through investment in the extractive sector.
- Take a leadership role in further developing and strengthening the EITI and certification systems in the mining sector. Encourage extractive sector companies to consider self-regulation that will contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication.
- Establish mechanisms to promote capacity building; exchange of experiences; identification and dissemination of best practices and creation of an appropriate knowledge base on mineral resources for strategic thinking and policy innovations.
- Work with like-minded countries and the World Bank Group to strengthen CSR requirements.
- Encourage new management techniques and promote broad-based capacities especially in science and technology.
- Increase availability of skills, knowledge and information and contribute to efforts to enhance the health & safety performance of mining in general.
- Contribute to efforts to improve the social, environmental, health and safety aspects of artisanal & small-scale mining, while recognizing the benefits derived through this activity.
- Make ‘no go’ areas decisions on the basis of biodiversity and other values and promote integration of biodiversity conservation goals in national mineral extraction plans.

The EU considers that the added value of CSD relies on its coordination potential expressed notably through its role of mobilizing experts and decision makers in a number of different fields that are essential for the development of policies. Since the mining issue in the context of sustainable development has not been dealt with in depth within the UN framework, the EU is looking forward to the RIM and CSD 18 discussions on this important topic. We attach particular importance to the contribution and input to be given by Major Groups to this debate.