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The Potential of Providing Multinational Mining Environmental Management Technical Expertise to Developing Countries

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What Demands the Rapid Expansion of Metal Mining are Placing on the Developing World?

- ◆ Given the rapid increase in the price of gold, copper, silver, uranium and rare earths, there has been a rapid increase in the development of very large commercial scale mines in Africa, South Asia and Central and South America.
- ◆ These proposed mines usually involve the development of very large open pits with associated mills which use hydrometallurgical processes.
- ◆ These proposed mines also potentially consume large quantities of chemicals, water and electric power.
- ◆ Due to their large size their environmental footprint can be very large.
- ◆ If the mine is developing a massive sulfide deposit, there is concern regarding the potential metallic content of leachate from waste rock piles and tailings ponds.
- ◆ Many developing countries do not have a robust regulatory system to manage the environmental impact from large scale commercial metal mines.

How Does the Developed World Provide Technical Assistance to Developing Countries?

- ◆ The World Bank's Oil, Gas and Mining Policy and Operations Unit provides on an as needed basis technical mining assistance for projects financed by the Bank.
- ◆ UNEP may assist individual countries through initiatives like the Major Rivers Program if mining is a major contributor to pollution in the river system.
- ◆ Individual countries provide technical assistance as part of their country to country diplomatic program. For example, Australia has provided technical mining expertise to several African countries. The US has provided such assistance as part of its trade agreements.

The Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainability

- ◆ http://www.globaldialogue.info/wn_e.htm
- ◆ The Global Dialogue was for national Governments with an interest in the mining, minerals and metals sector. Fifty-three countries participated in the Global Dialogue.
- ◆ The donors that have supported the Global Dialogue Process are the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Kingdom's Department of International Development, and Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.
- ◆ The Intergovernmental Forum is one of the key coordinators of technical information on mining. One of the goals of the forum is to share technical expertise among its membership.
- ◆ Funding however for the provision of project specific expertise is limited.

UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 19)

- ◆ CSD 19 met at the UN in May 2011. CSD attempted to issue a policy statement on mining which supported the Intergovernmental Forum and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) see <http://eiti.org/>.
- ◆ During discussions at CSD 19 many countries noted the need for project specific technical expertise to assist government in the review and approval of proposed mines.
- ◆ While individual countries may offer such assistance, there is no single intergovernmental body which can provide such assistance on a regular basis.
- ◆ There is some concern that if an individual country offers its technical expertise to a developing country, the findings of the effort could be labeled as a product of the developing country thus raising sovereignty concerns.

Proposed Approach to Provide Mining Technical Expertise

- ◆ Create a intergovernmental group composed of mining experts from the developed countries.
- ◆ Each country would nominate 4-5 technical experts who have international experience.
- ◆ The group would be funded annually by contributions from each individual country. Costs would be limited to covering travel expenses and possibly salaries.
- ◆ Management of the group could be implemented by the World Bank or UNEP.
- ◆ Upon request from a developing country, the group would propose a technical team composed of experts from countries which are not related to the proposed project. For example, if the proposed projects is owned by a company headquartered in London, the team would not select any expert with UK citizenship to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest.
- ◆ The technical team would only address purely technical issues related to the environmental affects of a proposed mine. The team would not address policy issues since those issues are clearly the domain of the sovereign country where the proposed mine is located.
- ◆ There appears to be support fro such an approach however no nation has formally proposed such an approach.