

Panel Discussion

Topic: Stakes, challenges and perspectives of mineral resource management in ACP countries

**ACP House
16 September 2011**

Concept Note

Since the end of the 1990s, the accelerated development of the emerging countries has increased global demand for mineral resources. Geographically speaking, a significant portion of these mineral resources, still largely untapped, are concentrated in ACP countries, which are considered natural reservoirs of these resources.

It is believed that with the steady growth of the global population, which some demographers estimate will reach 9 billion by 2050, there will be an explosion in the demand for manufactured goods, with a rapidly expanding middle class and an increase in the number of emerging countries. This trend will speed up the evolution of the global demand for both common metals such as lead, zinc and copper, as well as rare metals for which the strategic list is gradually expanding as they are increasingly being used in innovations in aeronautics, the automobile industry, defence, energy and health.



Depending on how countries or groups of countries respond to their delayed development, global competition for access to mineral resources could eventually become a race to the bottom, as the fight to acquire them is potentially dangerous for the most vulnerable countries, such as those of the ACP Group, if there is no strategic vision for tackling these issues. The consequences could be dire for these countries and for the world, as a whole.

Within the framework of an international consensus, therefore, there must be commitment to the ethical management of access to these mineral resources without hindering ACP countries from accessing their natural biodiversity and their geological resources through a sustainable development approach.

The main challenge facing ACP countries at this stage is developing the capacity to exploit their natural resources within a sustainable development framework, while at the same time mitigating any negative social and environmental effects and maximising social development. This requires a better understanding of the stakes and parameters involved in exploiting natural resources. These include developing the value-added chain of downstream activities from mining by defining and implementing ethical policies to identify and develop mineral resources, while creating conditions for a positive economic and social outcome and avoiding any negative environmental effects.

From an economic standpoint, it seems logical that expensive or rare natural resources should be handled with the utmost care and intelligence. Rarity also suggests that research, substitution and recycling strategies ought to be developed.

Where challenges to ACP countries are concerned, it has been noted that although some of them are endowed with considerable natural resources, four areas of concern exist:



- The development of natural resource sectors upstream, with the aim of implementing robust policies to identify the resources available, and to ensure their responsible development, while increasing the benefits from this type of activity;
- The social and environmental management of the mining sector so that the short-term benefits from mining activities do not lead to long-term, irreversible and multifaceted effects;
- Setting up viable and transparent institutions that are essential to the development and management of this sector;
- Training of local experts and adding value through local processing.

To enable ACP Ambassadors to gain a better understanding of the stakes and challenges surrounding the exploitation and management of their countries' natural resources, a panel discussion will be held at ACP House on Friday 16 September 2011.

This panel discussion, which forms part of the series of meetings on the sustainable economic development of ACP countries, will undoubtedly further mobilise our Ambassadors around the issue of mineral resources, with a view to adopting an All-ACP Framework of Action for the Mineral Resources Sector.

The proposed draft agenda is contained in document ACP/89/005/11 of 12 July 2011 hereto attached.
