

Workshop Explores Better Rules for Africa's Mining Regimes

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Kigali, Rwanda, 02 December 2009 - Efforts to determine the extent to which mining regimes can contribute to sustainable development moved a step further today, as the second of a series of consultative workshops to review a framework report on mining regimes in Africa started in Kigali following extensive collaboration between the African Union Commission (AUC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

The three-day Eastern and Southern Africa Validation Workshop on the International Study Group (ISG) Framework Report on Mining Regimes in Africa workshop, which is being hosted by the government of Rwanda, brings together experts from member states of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), development partners, and civil society organizations. The experts are reviewing the framework report on mining regimes in Africa that was compiled by the ISG. This validation workshop follows a similar exercise held last week for the West African region in Accra, Ghana.

Setting the tone for the experts' meeting, the Director of the ECA Sub Regional Office for East Africa, Mr. Antonio Pedro, said mining regimes that will provide for a lasting mining legacy are those that not only generate equitable revenue for all parties concerned and promote transparent and efficient use and deployment of mineral wealth, but also open up opportunities to entrench linkages between the mining sector and the local economy, expand infrastructure, knowledge and skills base and facilitate social and community development.

Such regimes "encourage local value addition and beneficiation, and ultimately help to build forms of capital that outlast the currency of mining and contribute to the formation of strong, resilient, diversified and competitive economies", he said.

Mr. Ayoup Zaid, Senior Policy Officer in the Department of Trade and Industry of the African Union Commission recalled the activities that have been carried out by the Commission in the advancement of the strategies around exploitation and management of natural resources as a catalyst for development. He told participants that the First African Union Conference of Ministers Responsible for Mineral Resources Development held in 2008, marked a migration in the strategic orientation towards strengthening forward planning and management capacity of African institutions. He also said the AU ministerial conference recommended to build upon the work of the ISG.

Mr. Zaid said the expectation of the AU Commission is that the workshop will provide policy guidelines and send clear signals to AU Member States, mining companies operating in Africa and to all development partners and the international community, that Africa is determined to utilize its mineral resources for the building of a prosperous future for its people.

Permanent Secretary Ms Caroline Kayonga represented Rwanda's Minister of State in Charge of Environment and Mines, Mr. Vincent Karega, at the workshop's official opening ceremony. Ms Kayonga called on the workshop to review all the issues around mining, including the environmental impact of mining activities and to make recommendations, which will guide mining regimes in Africa.

Other speakers at the official opening ceremony of the workshop were Ms Wivine Ntamubano of the East African Community and Ms Alisoa Vololoniaina from SADC.

Recommendations from the workshop, including those that came from the Accra meeting, will be used to adjust the ISG framework report and to make it more relevant, before it is presented for validation by experts from AU Member States and other stakeholders. Thereafter, it will be presented for consideration by AU Ministers responsible for mineral resources development before it is considered and adopted by Heads of State and Government. The report is then expected to be the foundation upon which mineral regimes in Africa will be based.

The ISG started its work in October 2007, under the leadership of the ECA. The first phase of its work involved producing a comprehensive body of knowledge, which will form the basis for developing future development-oriented mineral regimes in Africa. The implementation phase, which will be led by the AUC, will include developing toolkits, briefing notes, policy templates and guidelines, and other instruments for use in revising mineral regimes in Africa.

The Kigali workshop will end on Friday 4 December with a closing ceremony and a press conference, starting at 11:30 at the Laico Hotel in Kigali.

Members of the media are invited to attend. Media enquiries should be addressed to Mrs. Wynne Musabayana, AUC on +250 785646631 and Ms. Kaylois Henry, UNECA on +250 785673661

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