

view from the field

The International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM)

Paul Mitchell, President, ICMM

ICMM is a CEO-led industry group that addresses key priorities and emerging issues within the industry. It seeks to play a leading role within the industry in promoting good practice and improved performance, and encourages greater consistency of approach nationally and across different commodities through its association members and member companies.



With the premise that the mining and metals industry is essential for society, our mandate revolves around a responsible industry and, fundamentally, distinguishing good performers by their commitment to high corporate accountability through a Sustainable Development Framework. Commitment to that framework is a requirement of membership, and involves endorsing and abiding by ten principles, reporting indicators and third party assurance.

The mining industry today

Over the last few decades the spread of a global market economy has helped to lift millions of people out of poverty. At the same time, it has generated a tremendous increase in materials needed for economic development, particularly in emerging economies.

As a result the mining and metals industry has undergone an unprecedented period of rapid growth and geographic diversification. For many companies it has been a time of impressive financial performance. The raw materials from this enterprise are used in a huge range of products that make up the fabric of 21st century society from MRI machines to

suspension bridges, from tin cans to motor cars, from semi-conductors to the space shuttle.

But, with such remarkable success comes considerable responsibility.

For example, the mining industry is often the first to make significant inward investment in poor countries and this places the industry in a prime position to ensure a positive contribution at a critical stage in the host nation's economic development.

The range of countries that mining companies operate in has increased, with many companies making substantial investments in some of the most challenging environments in the world, from the Gobi Desert in Mongolia to the Andes in Latin America, and the Papuan highlands of Indonesia.

Recent progress

The work of ICMM began in 2001 when leading companies came together with the aims of distinguishing industry leaders, and making a contribution to raising standards and promoting good practice across the industry as a whole. It is clear from events in 2007 that we

have been building on significant progress in this direction during the past year.

Making Mining Count

One challenge facing the mining and metals industry is demonstrating to governments the social and economic benefits that investment in mining can bring, both at national and local levels. Through measures such as the Resource Endowment initiative, ICMM is building a better understanding of how modern mining can make a responsible contribution to the social and economic well-being of the regions and countries where it takes place.

Operating Responsibly

ICMM has a number of initiatives that relate to the development and ongoing management of mining and metals operations. These include, for example, ICMM's development of good practice guidance on the management of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, and its mercury stewardship programme to promote effective management of this hazardous substance.

A Worthwhile Legacy

What happens when a mine site closes? ICMM believes that a responsible approach to mining must cover the entire mining project cycle and beyond, not just the planning, construction, and operation of mines, but also closure and the period after the mine has closed. That is why ICMM launched its integrated mine closure guidance and is also participating in joint initiatives to contribute to address the issue of abandoned or orphaned mining sites.

Sustainable Materials

ICMM's remit extends beyond the mining process to include the basic materials - ingots to sheet metal - and final products - aluminium

cans to copper tube - produced by mining. Through initiatives like MERAG (the Metals Environmental Risk Assessment Guidance) and HERAG (the Health Risk Assessment Guidance), plus areas such as eco-efficiency, ICMM ensures that these essential products of the mining process are produced and used in a responsible way.

Stakeholder engagement

In 2007 we published a report with feedback from ICMM's draft position statement on "Mining and Indigenous Peoples issues", which was a direct result of our work with the World Conservation Union (IUCN), stemming partly from a co-hosted Mining and Indigenous Peoples Roundtable. Other work resulting from the IUCN dialogue included dissemination of the Good Practice Guidance for Mining and Biodiversity, participation in a review of IUCN's protected areas categories system, and participation in a new project related to mining legacy sites.

Part of the agenda of the G8 conference held at Heiligendamm, Germany in June 2007, was consideration of minerals supplies, to a lesser degree, metals. The work of ICMM was acknowledged in the conference's communiqué – a sign of the growing recognition of the importance our activities.

Consistent with our goal to promote greater clarity and consistency in the setting of occupational exposure limits (OELs) across the globe, ICMM held a multi-stakeholder workshop on the subject with representatives of the major OEL-setting bodies, and published a report, "The Setting and Use of Occupational Exposure Limits - Current Practice" in conjunction with the UK's Institute of Environment and Health (IEH).

In September 2007 ICMM participated in the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development in Geneva, where we presented an update on our Resource Endowment initiative to the forum's 38 national government members. Moving into Phase III of the initiative, we held workshops in Chile, Peru and Tanzania to discuss our findings and recommendations to improve economic outcomes from mining investments.

Notwithstanding the considerable progress made in a productive year, there remain significant challenges, not least in bringing together different levels of government, multilateral institutions, donor agencies, and local communities, as well as companies in the sector. We look forward to making significant inroads in 2008.

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