

Strengthening artisanal and small-scale mining for socio-economic development and poverty reduction in ACP Countries

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Over 500 people from more than 70 countries have assembled in Livingstone, Zambia for the International Conference on Artisanal and Small-scale Mining and Quarrying (ASM18) to chart a vision for sustainable development in the sector.

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is an important livelihood activity for millions of people in the developing world representing as many as 90% of the global mining workforce, however, environmental, social, business and labour challenges have hindered the potential of ASM to contribute to sustainable development.

“One of the greatest paradoxes of our time is epitomised in the African, Caribbean and Pacific region where there is suffering amidst plenty,” said H.E. Dr. Patrick Ignatius Gomes, Secretary-General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. “This is particularly so in the minerals sector, where nearly two-thirds of the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific States are either mining countries, or have mining potential, which if exploited rationally, could contribute to inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development.”

ASM18 may be the largest international gathering of artisanal and small-scale miners and quarry workers ever assembled and is the first international conference on artisanal and small-scale mining for over a decade. The conference will foster a global dialogue about the development opportunities and challenges of ASM and is a space for the voices of artisanal and small-scale mining and quarrying to share their visions of the future.

“ASM18 comes at a very critical moment in Zambia’s mining sector,” said Hon. Richard Musukwa, Minister of Mines and Minerals Development, Republic of Zambia. “Artisanal and small-scale mining and quarrying is important for Zambia to diversify beyond large-scale copper mining, and meet the objectives of Zambia’s 7th National Development Plan, to diversify the economy, create jobs, and reduce poverty.”

ASM18 is an initiative of the ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme, organised by the African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, European Union, United Nations Development Programme, and The Government of Zambia, with the support of The World Bank, The African Union, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, The Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development, and German Cooperation. A range of specialised mining institutions of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific have provided technical support, including the African Minerals Development Centre, the African Minerals and Geosciences Centre and the Pacific Community.

“Investing in the small scale private sector, in particular the large numbers of female artisanal and small-scale miners and quarry workers, is critical to catalyse wider changes in our economies and societies,” said Marjeta Jager, Deputy Director General of International Cooperation and Development, European Commission. The European Union is at the forefront of addressing conflict and human rights risks issues in ASM supply chains. “Our partnerships with the member states of the ACP Group of States and the United Nations are critical for realising Europe’s own implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals” said Ms Jager.

A wide spectrum of commodities will be discussed at ASM18 ranging from the well-known, such as gold, diamonds, tin, tungsten, tantalum, and coloured stones, to those that have yet to receive significant attention, such as Development Minerals, like gravel, and clay that are mined and used locally.

“Our global community has set ambitious Sustainable Development Goals and to reach them we must bring the millions of women and men involved in artisanal and small-scale mining and quarrying into the heart of the development agenda” says Ms. Janet Rogan, United Nations Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Zambia.

Delegates will chart the 'Mosi-oo-Tunya Declaration', using the traditional name of Victoria Falls, located adjacent to the conference venue. The declaration will emphasise the importance of the Development Minerals mined and used domestically, such as industrial minerals and construction materials.

"We want to be an association that supports women, who are hard workers and want to grow," says Josephine Aguttu, the lead member of the Busia United Miners Association, a quarry based in eastern Uganda that produces gravel and other construction materials. "My dream for this association is to see growth. We want to see growth in the whole community at large."

"My vision is to grow and to help people grow too," said Doussou Nabé, who runs STB, a construction company based in Guinea's capital city Conakry, and sources aggregate and sand from artisanal miners.

United Nations Development Programmes

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