

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Thursday 14 October 2021  
2:00-5:00 pm

**Background Document for Agenda Item 3:**

**Update on the implementation of UNEA resolution 4/19 on Mineral Resource Governance**

This note serves as a background document for consideration under Agenda Item 3: Update on the implementation of UNEA resolution 4/19 on Mineral Resource Governance.

The document highlights activities and outcomes related to the implementation of the resolution and mentions future planned activities in the run-up to UNEA 5.2 and beyond. The briefing will be followed by an exchange of views with Member States.

## **Update on the implementation of UNEA resolution 4/19 on Mineral Resource Governance**

The fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4) adopted resolution UNEP/EA.4/Res.19 on Mineral Resource Governance. The resolution recognizes the important contribution of the mining sector towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and the dependence of low-carbon clean technologies on metals and minerals. It also underlines the need to share knowledge and experience on regulatory approaches, implementation practices, technologies and strategies for the sustainable management of metal and mineral resources, including over the whole life of a mine and the post mining stage. The resolution builds on the findings of three reports: the summary report “*Mineral Resource Governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Gearing Extractive Industries Towards Sustainable Development*” for policymakers and business leaders from the International Resource Panel (2019), the UNEP/GRID Arendal report “*Mine tailings storage: Safety is no accident*” (2017) and the UNEP/GRID Geneva report on “*Sand and Sustainability: Finding New Solutions for Environmental Governance of Global Sand Resources*” (2019).

The resolution requests UNEP to collect information on sustainable practices, identify knowledge gaps and options for implementation strategies, and undertake an overview of existing assessments of different governance initiatives and approaches on sustainable management of metal and mineral resources, and report at the 5th session of the UN Environment Assembly. It also encourages governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations, academia and international institutions to take action within their different areas of competence.

During 2020, UNEP undertook a [broad consultation process](#) which engaged a total of 1,237 people, from 123 countries through 22 virtual consultative meetings held between July and October 2020. A [report on the progress](#) in the implementation of the resolution was tabled for noting at UNEA-5.

In the consultations, a preference was expressed for distributed forms of resource governance that promote **coherence and the harmonization of action at all scales**. It was noted that such approaches could take the form of building upon existing institutions and multi-stakeholder governance initiatives, as well as mainstreaming key aspects into national laws and regulatory instruments, supported by international cooperation, coordination and capacity-building.

Concerns were expressed about **governance capacity at all levels** (from community to international) and with respect to several themes. Lack of capacity development was perceived as a key barrier to achieving the aspirations of existing mineral resource governance initiatives. Some of the most pressing issues raised related to **artisanal and small-scale mining; transparency and accountability; environmental due diligence; tailings management; holistic project assessment and approval processes; the role of the financial sector; and the inclusion of local communities, indigenous peoples, women and vulnerable groups**. The issue of human rights violations experienced by people drawing public attention to environmental harm in the minerals sector was also discussed, as well as the importance of ensuring that barriers to inclusion in decision-making about mining were removed.

**The importance of developing and mainstreaming circularity in mining value chains was raised and the need to broaden the focus of mineral resources governance to include domestically consumed development minerals**, such as construction materials and industrial minerals, was also highlighted.

Several good practices were also presented during the consultations. There was a strong view that

**international initiatives centred on human rights and development and due diligence provided a strong guiding framework for the development of more specific initiatives and plans.** The Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management was considered to be an important development and its successful implementation was called for.

The consultations also highlighted the importance of the extraction of minerals and metals in the context of the efforts made by countries to achieve the ambition of the Paris Agreement as well as its role in the green recovery. Attention was placed on the need for sustainable and responsible supply of minerals, and in particular mineral aggregates. [Summary factsheets](#) were developed to present the succinct findings of each of the sub-regional and regional consultations.

Since the conclusion of the virtual consultative meetings in 2021, UNEP has continued to advance the agenda of mineral resource governance through the convening of events on the topic, in collaboration with partners. In January 2021, a webinar titled “[How to Strengthen Mineral Resource Governance in 2021](#)” was convened by UNEP, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform and the International Resource Panel. The topic of mineral resource governance was also presented by UNEP during a [panel event](#) in April 2021 to launch the development of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Practical Tool on Environmental Due Diligence in Mineral Supply Chains. In July 2021, UNEP convened a side event titled “[Towards Sustainable, Inclusive and Responsible Mineral Resources Governance Post COVID-19](#)” on the margins of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

UNEP will continue the engagement and advancement on the topic of mineral resource governance with Member States. At the regional level, the outcomes of the consultation on the UNEA-4 resolution will be presented during consultations with Member States. The objective of the discussions will be to define next priorities for the agenda on mineral resource governance, building on the findings of the 2020 consultations on the UNEA-4 resolution on mineral resource governance. The consultations are planned to take place between November and December 2021. Other planned activities include the development of guiding principles on a responsible and sustainable mining sector and the development of a guidance document on the sustainability of sand extraction which will provide clear recommendations to countries on the main issues to be addressed to reduce the environmental and societal impacts of the extraction of sand and gravels. UNEP is also partnering with the Principles for Responsible Investment on the process to establish an independent and self-sustaining institute which will oversee the implementation of the Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management.

Annexes:

[UNEA Progress Report on the Implementation of Resolution 4/19 on mineral resource governance](#)

[Executive Summary of the Report on Mineral Resource Governance and the Global Goals: An agenda for international collaboration](#)