UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S WORKING GROUP
ON TRANSFORMING THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Concept note for HLPF side-event

Critical Energy Transition Minerals to accelerate progress towards the SDGs

16th July

13h00 – 14h30 (NYC time)

Co-led by UN Regional Economic Commissions, gathered in the UN Working Group on Transforming Extractive Industries for Sustainable Development

Overview

Addressing climate change and achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement hinge on transitioning to low-carbon economies, heavily reliant on digitalization, renewable energy and electrification technologies. This transition necessitates critical energy transition minerals (CETMs)[1]. The demand for CETMs is projected to grow exponentially, with estimates suggesting a three-and-a-half-fold increase by 2030 across all minerals and even more pronounced increases in specific minerals.

The surge in demand for CETMs poses challenges, including new and expanded mining projects, environmental impacts, and socio-environmental conflicts in resource-rich nations. This situation underscores the urgency for innovative approaches such as participatory mechanisms, diversified sourcing, efficiency improvements, and recycling initiatives to tackle this demand sustainably.

Various initiatives at national, intergovernmental, and industry levels are emerging to manage supply chain challenges and mitigate risks associated with CETMs. However, substantial investments are required to responsibly mine, process, and utilize CETMs, presenting an opportunity to foster sustainable transformation of the mining sector and to support equitable access to low-carbon technologies.

Considering a market size estimated at USD 320 billion in 2022 (IEA), resource-rich countries have the opportunity to implement progressive tax regimes and deploy other fiscal measures to capture the economic development opportunities generated by mining activities. This approach can promote economic diversification, enhance value addition, and foster sustainable and equitable development. By sharing the benefits of this transformation with communities, these efforts can contribute to eradicating poverty.

Although not explicitly included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the relevance of CETMs to the 2030 Agenda's success is undeniable and configures a unique emerging topic. Given the theme of the 2024 HLPF - "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions" - CETMs require attention due to their profound impacts on economies, environment, health, livelihoods and human rights, with different regional implications, and potentially impeding progress towards global energy transition.

[1] Definition of CETMs vary according to different lists and points of reference. For this event and the work of the UN on this topic, CETMs generally refer to minerals that are required for the manufacturing of low-carbon technologies, and thus will see an increased demand in upcoming years. These include, non-exhaustively, aluminium, cobalt, copper, graphite, lithium, nickel, rare earth elements (REEs), zinc, among others.

ECA UNITED NATIONS ECLAC ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific UNITED NATIONS ESCWA Shared Prosperity Dignified Life UNECE

CETMs have achieved significant importance at the UN-level, prompting discussions on their long-term implications for national development, socioenvironmental protection, and equitable distribution of benefits from mineral extraction and industrialization.

In response to these challenges, initiative entitled 'Harnessing Critical Energy Transition Minerals for Sustainable Development in Least Developed and Land-Locked Developing Countries - Just Transitions in Low Carbon Technologies' was launched in 2023. This initiative is led by the SG Working Group on Transforming the Extractive Industries for Sustainable Development. The main objectives are to build trust, reliability, resilience, and benefit-sharing in existing critical mineral supply chains; and support mineral-rich developing countries in developing their productive, trade and regulatory capacities for long-term sustainable development. One of the main outputs will be a **UN Framework on Just Transitions for Critical Energy Transition Minerals**, which is expected by the end of 2024. The UN Framework will include **common voluntary principles** to be agreed by the SG's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, plus **policy recommendations** and **partnerships** to be leveraged for the development of durable institutional capacities in mineral-rich developing countries.

CETMs links to HLPF 2024 SDGs

SDG 1 (No Poverty): The sustainable extraction and utilization of CETMs can drive economic development by creating new opportunities in the mining sector, as well as by promoting economic diversification, thereby contributing to new jobs, poverty alleviation and inclusive growth.

SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): Integrated planning of mining projects must carefully consider potential disputes over resource use and their impacts on the territory and other human activities. For example, mining activities in regions experiencing water stress or contamination could jeopardize food production and community livelihoods.

SDG 13 (Climate Action): CETMs are essential for manufacturing wind turbines, solar panels, batteries, transmission lines, and other components crucial for renewable energy and electromobility technologies. These technologies play a pivotal role in achieving climate ambitions by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and advancing the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions): Responsible governance of CETMs extraction must seek transparency, equity, and fair benefit-sharing with local communities, reducing social tensions, eradicating violence, child labor, corruption and promoting stability.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals): Addressing challenges related to CETMs requires strong partnerships between governments, industry, civil society, and local communities to ensure sustainable and inclusive development pathways.

Objectives

This proposed side-event seeks to deepen discussions on the intersection of CETMs with the SDGs, fostering dialogue on innovative solutions and just transitions that reinforce the 2030 Agenda's objectives while addressing poverty and climate resilience. More specifically, the side-event will contribute to:

- Explore global trends, regional and national perspectives, best practices, and challenges in critical energy transition minerals exploitation, aiming to promote sustainable mining and processing practices and support just transitions in the global low-carbon technologies value chains.

- Showcase efforts and the process of elaboration of the UN Framework Just Transitions to Critical Energy Transition Minerals by the United Nations Working Group on Transforming Extractive Industries for Sustainable Development.

- Present the work of the UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals. Particularly, in connection with clusters focused on the sharing of economic benefits of CETMs, including through local value addition, while safeguarding social and environmental protections for affected communities and ecosystems.

- Strengthen international cooperation and highlight the potential of harnessing CETMs to promote sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Format

This side-event will be conducted in-person during the HLPF, with online transmission. Attendees will include staff from UN system agencies, policymakers, experts, researchers, members of civil society, and representatives from public and private companies.

The event will commence with a senior-level panel delivering opening remarks to set the scene, emphasizing the critical role of energy transition minerals (CETMs) in combatting climate change. The panel will highlight the significance of CETMs for achieving global climate goals and sustainable development. Furthermore, the panel will introduce key UN global initiatives focused on promoting international cooperation in addressing CETMs, aligning with the thematic focus of the HLPF 2024.

For the roundtable session, a moderator will begin with a brief introduction, outlining key questions for discussion. Each of the speakers in the roundtable will have up to 5 minutes to share insights and strategies on CETMs, focusing on topics of sustainability across and along the value chain, benefit sharing, local value addition, environmental and social issues and economic diversification.

If time allows, the session will include a short audience Q&A segment (5 minutes), allowing for a couple of questions related to the roundtable discussion. Finally, panelists will have 1 minute for final remarks, highlighting actionable follow-up points.

Draft Agenda

NYC time	Agenda item
13:00-13:20	**Opening remarks & setting the scene**

Why could access to certain minerals hold the key for fighting climate change?

How can the UN support just transitions on critical minerals and boost international cooperation?

Introductory remarks:

- Selwin Hart, UN Assistant Secretary-General for the Climate Action Team (CAT), on behalf of SG Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals
- José Manuel Salazar, Executive Secretary of UNECLAC, in his role of coordination of the Regional Economic Commissions

13:20-14:30 Roundtable: Critical Energy Transition Minerals to accelerate progress towards SDGs

What elements and strategies around CETMs can ensure the benefits are shared fairly among and within countries, promote local value addition and economic diversification, while ensuring safeguards for the people and environment?

Which of those elements, based on national and regional perspectives, are most relevant to composing a global set of voluntary principles and to guiding overall UN efforts to support countries harness the potential of CETMs?

Regional perspectives on CETMs

- Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP
- Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of UNESCWA
- Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary of UNECE
- Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of the UNECA

Reflections on a set of global voluntary principles – SG Panel on CETMs

- Zulfiya Suleimenova, Advisor to the President, Special Representative on International Environmental Cooperation, Republic of Kazakhstan (TBC)
- Francisco Paris, Senior Advisor, EITI International Secretariat (TBC)
- Erica Westenberg, Director of Governance Programs at Natural Resource Governance Institute (TBC)

Closing remarks

- Thilmeeza Hussain, Director of the Regional Commissions New York Office, RCNYO