

Meeting Report

From Resolution to Action: Strengthening Environmental Law and Governance for Minerals and Metals

First dialogue under UNEA Resolution 7/3: Strengthening international cooperation on the environmentally sound management of minerals and metals

Held as a Special Event in the margins of the Thirteenth Annual Subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

**8 September 2026, 13:15 to 14:45, East African Time
Conference Room 3, United Nations Office at Nairobi and Microsoft Teams (hybrid)**

Under the [UNEA Resolution 7/3 on Strengthening international cooperation on the environmentally sound management of minerals and metals](#), the Executive Director of UNEP is requested to compile submissions to inform the convening of dialogues among Member States as well as relevant stakeholders and partners to discuss:

- (a) Enhancing international cooperation on the sustainable management of minerals and metals;
- (b) Resource recovery from mining waste and tailings through sustainable approaches, such as circularity;
- (c) Best practices for the environmentally sound management of minerals and metals;
- (d) Enhancing cooperation to strengthen technological, technical, financial and scientific capabilities related to the management of environmental aspects of minerals and metals, in particular in developing countries.

The special event, *From Resolution to Action: Strengthening Environmental Law and Governance for Minerals and Metals*, was convened in response to this request as the first in a series of planned dialogues in the lead up to UNEA 8.

Moderated by Ms Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director of the Law Division, the event brought together a wide range of voices from across the minerals and metals value chain, to discuss the ways in which environmental laws, institutions, and voluntary industry

standards are already shaping the energy transition, where the main gaps and challenges lie, good practice examples from countries and what forms of international cooperation are needed to address them. The discussion therefore considered the main elements of the minerals and metals value chain from exploration and extraction through processing, downstream manufacturing, responsible sourcing, resource recovery, mine closure and the management of legacy impacts.

Participants

A detailed list of participants is in the Annex to this report.

Meeting Agenda

I. Opening Remarks

By Ms Patricia Kameri-Mbote, Director, Law Division

Ms Kameri-Mbote highlighted the growing importance of minerals and metals for infrastructure, economic development and the clean energy transition. The increasing demand for critical energy transition minerals presents opportunities for producer countries, including through local value addition, employment, sustainable development and greater participation in global value chains. At the same time, mining activities can exert significant pressure on biodiversity, land and water resources, generate pollution and waste, contribute to climate impacts, and affect human health, community livelihood and the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

She emphasized that environmental rule of law is essential to establishing clear safeguards and responsibilities, preventing environmental harm and protecting environmental rights. However, the effectiveness of environmental laws depends on strong institutions, adequate capacity, reliable and accessible data, monitoring and enforcement, as well as meaningful participation and access to information and justice.

II. Opening Plenary Scene-setting presentation

By Ms Sheila Aggarwal-Khan, Director, Industry and Economy Division

Ms Aggarwal-Khan underscored the rapidly increasing importance of minerals and metals for development, infrastructure and the energy transition. She noted that the World Bank has estimated that approximately three billion tonnes of minerals and metals will be required for the deployment of renewable energy and energy-storage technologies.

Growing demand is also being driven by electric vehicles, solar panels, digital infrastructure and other technologies.

However, she stressed that the growing minerals demand is accompanied by significant environmental and social impacts, including impacts on land, biodiversity and water quality, as well as pollution-related impacts on human health. These impacts can in turn undermine the stability and resilience of the minerals value chain.

A central message of the scene-setting presentation was that environmental sustainability and social safeguards are not necessarily in tension with economic objectives. Rather, stronger environmental performance coupled with meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples and responses to environmental and social harms can contribute to more stable and economically resilient mineral supply chains. Improved environmental and social performance can also reduce liability and investment risks while creating opportunities for companies to access markets in which consumers and investors increasingly demand greater transparency and responsible sourcing.

Ms Aggarwal-Khan emphasized the need for stronger legal and institutional frameworks, appropriate fiscal and policy incentives, greater resource efficiency, local value addition, circularity, access to finance and technology, and greater transparency across the value chain. UNEP's work with partners, including through the UN Task Force on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, was identified as an avenue through which these issues could be further advanced.

Ms Aggarwal-Khan concluded by positioning the meeting as the first in a series of dialogues that would contribute to identifying priorities for strengthening responsible minerals and metals value chains and inform the broader process towards UNEA-8.

III. Panel Discussion

The moderated panel discussion brought together perspectives from government, business and industry, and Indigenous Peoples. The panellists included Ms Ilja Donkervoort, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management of the Netherlands; Mr Jerome Lugumira, National Environment Management Authority of Uganda; Mr John Lindberg, Business and Industry Major Group representative to UNEP; and Ms Louisa April, Indigenous Peoples Major Group representative to UNEP. The discussion also included additional inputs by Ms Simone Filippini, the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment.

During this session, the panellists were asked to reflect on the challenges, good practices, and cooperation needs related to environmental law and governance for minerals and

metals, taking a value chain and life cycle perspective from mining through to downstream manufacturing, and energy transition as an entry point.

a) Gaps between environmental laws and implementation

What are the most significant gaps in environmental laws, policies and standards applicable to minerals and metals and their implementation in practice?

In response to the first guiding question concerning the implementation gap, **Ms Donkervoort** identified three principal challenges: institutional capacity, accountability and data.

First, authorities and other relevant stakeholders require sufficient technical knowledge and institutional capacity to implement applicable laws and standards. Given the cross-cutting nature of mineral and metals governance, this also requires effective inter-agency and inter-ministerial coordination. Second, effective and independent oversight is necessary to ensure accountability for implementation. Third, reliable, high-quality and accessible data is crucial to understanding potential and actual environmental impacts and support evidence-based decision-making.

Ms Donkervoort then invited the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, represented by **Ms Simone Filippini**, to expound on these points. She reinforced the importance of institutional capacity in this discussion; drawing on the Commission's experience supporting countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, she observed that governments often understand what needs to be achieved but face greater challenges regarding how to implement environmental and sustainable development objectives.

She emphasized that institutional capacity-building requires time and sustained support rather than short-term interventions. Collaborative governance involving civil society, local communities and decentralized government authorities can assist countries in navigating complex environmental, social and economic considerations. Stronger institutional capacity was also presented as beneficial to the private sector because predictable and effectively implemented regulatory systems can reduce investment risks.

Mr Lugumira similarly noted that Uganda has relatively robust legislation but faces challenges in implementing and monitoring its provisions, particularly at district and local-government levels. He highlighted persistent challenges relating to mine closure and rehabilitation, technical capacity, and gaps concerning responsibility for supervising resettlement action plans. He further observed that although community participation is recognized in law, it does not always result in meaningful influence over decisions.

Attention was drawn to artisanal and small-scale mining. While legislation recognizes the sector, enforcement tends to focus disproportionately on large-scale mining. This creates environmental and health risks, including the misuse of chemicals in gold mining.

Mr Lindberg identified three major gaps from the private-sector perspective: capacity, implementation and incentives. He noted that even where countries have strong legislative frameworks, limited government capacity can create significant implementation bottlenecks and investment risks.

He emphasized that incentives for responsible mining are frequently insufficient. Companies that adopt higher environmental and social standards may not receive a corresponding market premium, while products produced according to lower standards can compete at similar prices. This can create a commercial disincentive for responsible operators. He therefore suggested that governments and the international community should either create stronger incentives for responsible practices or ensure that operators failing to meet minimum standards face appropriate consequences and restricted market access.

b) Local benefit sharing lead to responsible mining chains

Following up on Mr Lindberg's response, Mr Kameri-Mbote posed the question: *how does the integration of sustainability standards into national frameworks and initiatives has enabled local benefit sharing, access to specific markets, and enabled responsible supply chains*. In his response, **Mr Lindberg** noted that though he has not seen a very wide integration of standards in national frameworks, there has been a rising interest and utilisation of the same by investors. He then distinguished between benefits to communities affected by mining and local value addition further along the mineral value chain. While local communities should benefit from mining activities affecting them, decisions concerning downstream processing and movement further along the value chain may involve broader national, strategic and commercial considerations.

Speaking from the perspective of Indigenous Peoples, **Ms April** emphasized that Indigenous Peoples' rights remain insufficiently reflected in several minerals and metals governance frameworks. She identified a persistent gap between legal and policy commitments and implementation in practice, particularly with respect to meaningful participation, customary tenure and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

She stressed that Indigenous Peoples should be understood as rights holders rather than merely stakeholders. Participation should therefore extend beyond consultation after decisions have largely been taken, towards co-development and, where appropriate, co-

management of solutions. Indigenous knowledge, sciences and practices should be recognized within environmental governance, including through monitoring and assessment.

She further emphasized that environmental safeguards should apply throughout the entire minerals value chain, from extraction and processing through use, reuse and end-of-life management. A just transition should therefore consider not only economic benefits but also land, culture, rights, environmental protection and access to remedy.

c) **International cooperation and partnerships**

What, in your view panellists, are the types of international cooperation models and partnerships which are needed to strengthen environmental governance across the minerals and metals value chain, particularly for developing countries?

On the possible models of international cooperation, **Mr Lugumira** highlighted the value of regional environmental governance partnerships, particularly in regions where minerals and mining activities and their environmental impacts cross national borders. He noted that countries within East Africa may have differing levels of institutional capacity and that weaknesses in one jurisdiction can have implications for others. Regional cooperation can facilitate knowledge exchange, capacity-building and greater coherence. He also called for long-term regulatory capacity partnerships, drawing on experiences from Norway and the Netherlands, especially on oil and gas. Applying these lessons to the other sectors in the mining industry would be greatly beneficial as there is continued discovery and exploration of valuable mineral resources in the region.

Ms Donkervoort noted that the Netherlands, as a consumer country, recognizes its responsibility to contribute to sustainability further upstream in international minerals and metals supply chains. She emphasized that partnerships should establish an enabling environment in which environmental and social safeguards are treated as fundamental conditions for responsible and resilient value chains. Examples of relevant initiatives included the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development, and the European Partnership on Responsible Minerals.

Ms April called for cooperation based on co-development, rather than capacity-building approaches that treat Indigenous Peoples as passive beneficiaries. Governments, Indigenous Peoples, companies and investors should participate from the outset in developing policies and solutions. Cooperation should be grounded in human rights and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, while

recognizing Indigenous knowledge and ensuring that environmental and human rights standards apply throughout the entire value chain.

Mr Lindberg proposed several practical mechanisms for international cooperation. These included developing model permitting packages based on existing good practices that could be adapted to national circumstances; regional capacity-building; the digital knowledge hub; improved traceability across the value chain; and greater recognition of the role of standards in complementing national legislation. He cautioned against selecting a single universal standard, instead proposing internationally agreed parameters or "guard rails" for what constitutes a robust standard while allowing context-specific approaches.

Before opening the floor to questions from the audience, Ms Kameri-Mbote specifically asked each panellist to *identify one practical issue or topic that should be advanced in the next dialogues*, and who should be involved.

- **Ms Donkervoort** proposed linking responsible mining with institutional capacity. While there is already knowledge of what responsible mining should look like, countries often face difficulties in putting this into practice because of institutional capacity constraints.
- **Mr Lugumira** emphasised the need to strengthen enforcement capacity, particularly at the local-government level. He also highlighted the importance of greater participation by mining companies in the dialogues, noting that companies have resources and practical experience that could contribute to addressing implementation challenges.
- **Mr Lindberg** called for the next dialogue to "go back to basics" by examining, from national perspectives, what actually prevents responsible mining practices from being implemented. He suggested that UNEP is well placed to facilitate this deeper examination across different national contexts.
- **Ms April** identified clarifying what constitutes good practice as a key priority. She called for clear, practical and implementable guidance or a roadmap, particularly for projects affecting Indigenous Peoples' lands.

IV. Interactive discussion:

Ms Kameri-Mbote then opened the floor for additional questions, comments and interventions from participants. The interactive discussion expanded the conversation beyond the panel's reflections, highlighting practical challenges in translating

environmental governance frameworks into effective action across the minerals and metals value chain.

Participants emphasised the importance of **broadening engagement beyond national governments**. While governments have a central role in translating international commitments into national legislation and policy, effective implementation also requires the participation of legal professionals, research institutions, advocacy groups and local communities. Their involvement was considered particularly important in ensuring that the concerns and experiences of communities affected by mineral exploitation are reflected in decision-making, implementation and enforcement.

The discussion also drew attention to **illegal and informal mining**, including the challenges posed by criminal organisations and minerals entering formal markets through unregulated channels. Participants discussed how international environmental commitments, including UNEA resolutions, can be implemented in contexts where mining activities operate outside formal regulatory systems. This was linked to the need for reliable **traceability and transparency across mineral supply chains**, including mechanisms capable of identifying the origin and movement of minerals.

A related concern was the **transboundary nature of mineral activities**. Participants asked how activities spanning countries with different legal and regulatory frameworks can be effectively governed, pointing to the importance of regional cooperation and greater alignment between national approaches. Capacity-building was identified as an important component of this cooperation, particularly where governments require additional technical and institutional support to develop, implement and enforce legislation for responsible mining.

Several interventions focused on the **effectiveness and independence of environmental institutions**. Participants highlighted insufficient budgets, equipment and technical capacity, unclear institutional mandates, corruption and regulatory capture as factors that can undermine enforcement. Concerns were also raised about political interference and the need to ensure that environmental regulators and relevant authorities have the resources and institutional protection necessary to carry out their functions effectively. The discussion therefore pointed to the value of strengthening institutions alongside legislation, rather than treating legal reform as sufficient.

Indigenous Peoples' rights re-emerged as a particularly important dimension of responsible mineral governance. Participants stressed that most mineral resources are located on Indigenous Peoples' territories and that Indigenous Peoples should

consequently be central to decisions concerning their development. Questions focused on the practical application of FPIC and what should happen where Indigenous Peoples do not consent to a proposed mining project. The discussion also emphasised that Indigenous Peoples should participate through their representative institutions and that respect for their rights should be understood as an integral part of environmentally sound mineral development, rather than as a separate safeguard.

Participants further raised concerns about the **fragmentation of standards and initiatives** governing responsible mining. Rather than adding further layers of requirements, there was interest in improving coherence and interoperability between existing approaches, including through mechanisms such as joint audits and by assessing whether new initiatives provide genuine additional value. The digital knowledge hub was also identified as a tool that could be more effectively leveraged to support implementation, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

The discussion additionally considered the role of **markets, investment and incentives**. Participants questioned whether international initiatives relating to traceability, trade and financing could inadvertently create barriers for producer countries or insufficiently reflect their perspectives. There was also interest in understanding what businesses consider when making investment decisions and how economic incentives can be aligned with responsible environmental and social practices. In this regard, the private sector was seen as an important participant in developing and applying standards, while participants cautioned that responsibility for governance and accountability should remain with public institutions rather than being left to voluntary corporate initiatives alone.

In closing the discussion, Ms Kameri-Mbote thanked the panellists and participants for their engagement and noted that the breadth of issues raised demonstrated the importance of continuing the dialogue. The discussion reinforced that the challenge is not simply formulating minerals and metals governance systems for responsible mining, but also understanding and addressing the factors that prevent its consistent application. The interventions therefore pointed towards future dialogues that are more practical and implementation-oriented.

V. Closing Remarks

By Sheila Aggarwal-Khan, Director, Industry and Economy Division

In her closing remarks, Ms Aggarwal-Khan reflected on the principal themes emerging from the first dialogue. These included the need to strengthen institutional capacity and monitoring, improve implementation and enforcement, and consider how incentives can encourage companies to adopt higher environmental and social standards. Participants had also raised the importance of regional cooperation and partnerships between producer and consumer countries, co-development approaches involving affected stakeholders, value addition, transparency and traceability, and making effective use of existing platforms and mechanisms.

The discussion identified many areas of interest, including:

- **Developing practical implementation tools**, including model permitting approaches and clear guidance on good environmental governance practices that can be adapted to national circumstances.
- **Strengthening incentives and accountability**, including consideration of both positive incentives for responsible operators and measures to address non-compliance.
- **Addressing artisanal and small-scale mining**, including environmental impacts, chemical use, formalization, monitoring and enforcement.
- **Improving transparency, traceability and supply-chain accountability**, while building on existing mechanisms and avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- **Improving coherence and interoperability among standards**, potentially including cooperation on common parameters for robust standards and mechanisms such as joint audits.
- **Strengthening regional and international cooperation**, including cooperation between mineral-producing and consuming countries and across jurisdictions affected by transboundary mineral activities.
- **Making effective use of existing platforms**, including the Digital Knowledge Hub and relevant work under the UN Task Force on Critical Energy Transition Minerals.

The first dialogue therefore established a foundation for a continuing series of discussions focused on translating existing knowledge and commitments into effective environmental law and governance across the minerals and metals value chain. The next dialogue will build on this foundation by exploring selected issues in greater depth and identifying opportunities to advance practical implementation and international cooperation.

Annex - List of Attendees

#	Name	Organization / Country
1.	Federico Rossi	UNEP
2.	Juliana Almeida	UNEP
3.	Kgopodiso Shale Mosinki	Botswana Mission
4.	Bushra Ahmed Abdi	Somali Mission
5.	Lwazi Mofokeny	South Africa High Commission
6.	Lavie Mutanganshuro	Rwanda High Commission
7.	Kutemba Fwoloshi	Zambia High Commission
8.	Tara Cornu	Embassy of France
9.	Sheida Asgharzadeh	Iran
10.	Abbas Shahbazi	Iran
11.	Bruno Abaurre	DPR Brazil
12.	Sergei Daineko	Government of Russia
13.	Phelix Oketch	Kenya
14.	Rabie Al Rahbi	Government of Oman
15.	Yvonne Owendi	Kenya
16.	Elsie Asura	Kenya
17.	Ann Wamuhu	Kenya, Support Humanity Cameroon
18.	Caren Nalwenge	Kenya
19.	Frankie Orana	United States
20.	Musa Musia Wawuyo	CTECO, Tanzania
21.	Menekse Keksi	Permanent Mission of Rep of Türkiye
22.	Cynthia Mulville	DPR Argentina
23.	Eugenia Ponce	DPR Colombia
24.	Maria Galambos	Ministry of Living Environment Hungary
25.	Csilla Foder	Ministry of Living Environment Hungary
26.	Milene Pacheco	UNEP
27.	Tang Wei	Chinese Mission
28.	Margret Nell	CYNESA
29.	Beyene Russom	Eritrea
30.	Vann Monynneath	Cambodia
31.	Zeyad El-Tahry	Egypt
32.	Kamina Lounis	Algeria
33.	Ann Gitau	AEGEE

34.	Nadiya Nazri	Government of Malaysia
35.	Juan Belto	UNEP
36.	Laban Karani	Kenya
37.	Jerusa Kitoto	Sauti ya Mtoto Foundation Tanzania
38.	Khan Puot	DMUN
39.	Tamara Valua	Water is Right Foundation
40.	Michael Omondi	World Scout Organisation
41.	Neema Seki	Society of Native Nation
42.	Coleen Onyango	Women Major Group
43.	Denis Waweru	Footsteps Bangladesh
44.	Ndihokubwayo Gelvais	IPREBAD.CBT
45.	Millicent Kagwiria	Saffron Wellness
46.	Dalia Marquez	Jouentod Unida en Accion
47.	Teresia Gitau	CYNESA
48.	Ivy Mburu	German Embassy
49.	Munyira Wambua	Laudato Si Movement
50.	Marangu Nancy	Chemichemi Foundation
51.	Caren Otieno	CYMG
52.	Kanako Okraro	Japan
53.	Halima Dube	USIU-Africa IUNCBD
54.	Reuben Mwangi Wanjiru	CYMG
55.	Beril Okoth	CYMG
56.	Rita B. Ondari	CYMG / OSGYN
57.	Ramuno Taitilaile	Lithuania
58.	Maureen Wanjiru	Strathmore IUNCBD
59.	Lais Paiva Siqueira	UNEP
60.	Chiara Magrelli	UNEP
61.	Leosz Baumann	UNEP
62.	Angelique Muhavani	UNEP
63.	Alexander Graham	UNEP
64.	Max Van Deursen	UNEP
65.	Shirley Liang	UNEP
66.	Angela Kariuki	UNEP
67.	Abdullahi Nura	UNEP
68.	Patricia Mbote	UNEP
69.	Sheila Aggarwal-Khan	UNEP
70.	Dina Abdelhakim	UNEP

71.	Tabea Sophie Rothmund	UNEP
72.	Laetitia Zobel	UNEP
73.	Hawanatu Kebe	UNEP
74.	Annie Miningah	UNEP
75.	Ilja Donkervoort	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management Netherlands
76.	Jerome Lugumira	National Environment Management Authority
77.	John Lindberg	Business and Industry Major Group to UNEP
78.	Louisa April	Indigenous Peoples Major Group to UNEP
Virtual		
79.	Aphrodite Smagadi	UNEP
80.	Beatriz Fernandez	UNEP
81.	Brenda Koekkoek	UNEP
82.	Charlotte Ndakorerwa	UNEP
83.	Elisa Tonda	UNEP
84.	Heidi Savelli-Soderberg	UNEP
85.	Janyl Moldaliev	UNEP
86.	Joseph Orangias	UNECE
87.	Rongbao Jiang	UNEP
88.	Sushmita Patel	UNEP
89.	Platchkov Laura Maria BAFU	Government of Switzerland
90.	Simone Filippini	NCEA
91.	Charlotte Boyer	NRGI
92.	Yblin Roman Escobar	SIRGE Coalition
93.	Egidijus Viskontas	Government of Lithuania
94.	HARPHAM Solange	ICC
95.	Neta Galon	Government of Israel
96.	Gibrilla Kamara	N/A
97.	Galina Bitsadze_Georgia	Government of Georgia
98.	Darlington Marange	N/A
99.	Dr ZAGRE Eugène	N/A
100.	Johanna Sydow	Heinrich Boell Stiftung
101.	Yousef Tayseer Jawabreh	N/A
102.	Manar Atiyah	N/A