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The role of African Geological Surveys in attracting mineral investment into Africa

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Africa has vast resources of important and strategic minerals, and a significant number of mineral-rich countries is found on the African continent. Despite the fact that commodity prices are low at the moment, the increasing scarcity of certain minerals has ensured that African minerals receive renewed interest. But large areas of Africa remain under-explored, and Africa received only 16% of global exploration expenditure (S-America 27%, Australia + Canada 26%) in 2014. In 2011, Africa received only 15% of global mining investment (Latin America 28%, North America 18%). At the same time, mineral extraction is crucial for the economic development of many African countries.

In today's IT world, investors need access to geo-scientific data, which must be logically presented, well structured, comprehensive, easy to use and first and foremost digital. Geological Surveys therefore must have digital geological map production, well equipped + functional laboratories, regional geochemical surveys, historical exploration archives as digital data bases, and airborne geophysical surveys.

The promotion of Africa's mineral potential needs to be done in a joint effort, as there are vast differences in the quality of African Geological Surveys. The Organisation of African Geological Surveys (OAGS), OneGeology, the Geo-Information in Africa project (GIRAF), the Geoscience Information Consortium (GIC), and the Commission for the Geological Map of the World (CGMW) can all play an important role in this. African Geological Surveys need to obtain and archive historical data, build capacity and generate new data, they need to compile saleable products from both, to market these products, and efforts need to be made to bring African countries on an equal level.

As an example, the Namibian Ministry of Mines and Energy promotes exploration and mining through the services of a vibrant Geological Survey and the Directorate of Mining's efficient administration of modern mining legislation. Centrally located in Windhoek, they house information about some 100 years of exploration in Namibia, as well as modern geological, geophysical and geochemical data; and at the same time provide licensing services, all under one roof.

Not all great mining resources are in the ground, the data enabling successful exploration are as important.

