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Delivering Sustainable Development Goals: the need for a new Social Contract for mining

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The Sustainability Development Goals refer to sharing the wealth generated by mining more equitably and to socio-cultural consequences of geological activities, including nation building. How are such objectives to be delivered?

Of the world's 200 or so countries, mining is focussed on fewer than 60, partly because of geology but also for reasons as diverse as the absence of modern mining law, baseline geological information, infrastructure, a skilled indigenous workforce and stable governance.

Many countries fear "resource colonialism" and wish to retain more of the wealth from mining by adding value in-country.

New, highly transparent arrangements are needed that recognise the interests of mining companies and populations at local, regional and national level, balancing the use of land for mining against the claims of other industries, agriculture, urban development and ecological demands including water protection, forestry and recreation.

A more inclusive Social Contract^(a) would need to embrace individual applicant companies, national and local government, local communities and other stakeholder groups, and be aimed at delivering Sustainable Development Goals. I will talk about how the International Resource Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme with the International Council for Metals and Mining could develop and promote such a Contract as best practice.

^(a) In the theories of Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, and others, an agreement, entered into by individuals, that results in the formation of the state or of organized society, the prime motive being the desire for protection, which entails the surrender of some or all personal liberties.

