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# **MINING and the ENVIRONMENT**

**The Berlin Guidelines**



A study based on an International Round Table in June 1991, organized by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, United Nations, and the Development Policy Forum of the German Foundation for International Development.

**Mining Journal Books**

## CHAPTER TEN

### **The Berlin Guidelines**

As the Berlin Round Table drew to a close, a series of discussions were held to obtain a consensus of the views amongst participants at the meeting. This chapter comprises the full document submitted.

Worldwide long-term economic development can best be achieved through the pursuit of sustainable development policies comprising a balance of economic, socio-cultural and environmental protection measures. While taking into account global environmental concerns, each country should apply this concept to meet the needs of its environment and economic circumstances.

Sustainable mining activities require good environmental stewardship in all activities, from exploration and processing to decommissioning and reclamation. It acknowledges the importance of integrating environmental and economic considerations in the decision-making process and the fact that the mineral deposits are unique in their occurrence. It recognizes the importance of mining to the social, economic and material needs of society, in particular for developing countries, and that minerals, notably metals, offer great potential for the use of future generations through increased recycling programmes.

Sustainable mining under appropriate environmental guidelines is based on interaction between industry, governments, non-governmental organizations and the public, directed towards optimizing economic development while minimizing environmental degradation. The need for such guidelines is recognized by industry,

governments and international agencies. It is also recognized that the political will of governments, together with the commitment of industry management and of the community, are the essential conditions needed to enforce environmental legislation and, more importantly, to ensure compliance with all applicable laws for the protection of the environment, employees and the public.

#### **10.1 Addressed to the Mineral Sector**

Governments, mining companies and the minerals industries should as a minimum:

1. Recognize environmental management as a high priority, notably during the licensing process and through the development and implementation of environmental management systems. These should include early and comprehensive environmental impact assessments, pollution control and other preventive and mitigative measures, monitoring and auditing activities and emergency response procedures.

2. Establish environmental accountability in industry and government at the highest management and policy-making levels.

3. Encourage employees at all levels to recognize their responsibility for environmental management and ensure that adequate resources, staff and requisite training are available to implement environmental plans.

4. Ensure the participation and dialogue with the affected community and other directly interested parties on the environmental aspects of all phases of mining activities.

5. Adopt best practices to minimize environmental degradation, notably in the absence of specific environmental regulations.

6. Adopt environmentally sound technologies in all phases of mining activities and increase the emphasis on the transfer of appropriate technologies which mitigate environmental impacts, including those from small-scale mining operations.

7. Seek to provide additional funds and innovative financial arrangements to improve environmental performance of existing mining operations.

8. Adopt risk analysis and risk management in the development of regulation and in the design, operation and decommissioning of mining activities, including the handling and disposal of hazardous mining and other wastes.

9. Reinforce the infrastructure, information systems service, training and skills in environmental management in relation to mining activities.

10. Avoid the use of such environmental regulations that act as unnecessary barriers to trade and investment.

11. Recognize the linkages between ecology, socio-cultural conditions and human health and safety, both within the workplace and the natural environment.

12. Evaluate and adopt, wherever appropriate, economic and administrative instruments such as tax incentive policies to encourage the reduction of pollutant emissions and the introduction of innovative technology.

13. Explore the feasibility of reciprocal agreements to reduce transboundary pollution.

14. Encourage long-term mining investment by having clear environmental standards with stable and predictable environmental criteria and procedures.

## **10.2 Addressed to Development Assistance Agencies**

Multilateral and bilateral assistance agencies have an essential role to play in furthering environmental management, particularly in developing nations, and in assisting these nations in programmes to protect their environment, both nationally and as part of the global environmental system. Accordingly, they should:

1. Accord high priority to the mitigation of environmental degradation associated with mining in developing countries to achieve high environmental performance.

2. Initiate, as an integral part of any exploration and mining project, environmental institutional building programmes. Special support should be given to countries actively working to improve their environmental capabilities.

3. Require that all mining projects supported shall contain a training component that will include specific training on environmental awareness and its application to the mining sector.

4. Support increased research regarding the development of new processes, with fewer environmental impacts, including recycling.

5. Support the development of activities that would mitigate adverse effects on the socio-cultural fabric and the ecosystem. To achieve this objective, international agencies should give priority to education and training which increase awareness of these issues and allow the affected communities to participate in decision-making.

6. In supporting mining projects, agencies should also take into account the following:

- rehabilitation of displaced population;
- environmental history of the country;
- large scale impact on socio-cultural patterns;
- the overall economic balance of the project vis-à-vis its total environmental impact;
- the impact on other natural resources and ecologically sensitive areas (e.g. protected forest lands, mangroves, wildlife parks and neighbouring waterbodies).

7. Promote conferences and policy research on environmental management practices and technologies, and ensure the dissemination of this information.

8. Support and promote regional co-operative programmes to achieve sustainable development of mineral resources.

9. Adopt environmentally safe methods of mining and processing for existing projects.

10. Increase and co-ordinate their assistance to developing nations in the field of environmental policies management.