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World Bank's CASM Initiative and Mozambique Aim to Tap on Small-scale Mining Opportunities to Reduce Rural Poverty

Maputo and Washington, DC, September 3, 2009 — The World Bank-led Communities and Small-scale Mining initiative (CASM) and the Ministry of Mineral Resources of Mozambique are co-hosting an international conference that will highlight how artisanal and small-scale mining can further contribute to poverty alleviation particularly in rural areas.

This year's CASM's annual international conference from September 8-14 will be held in Maputo and Chimoio, where artisanal and small-scale mining experts along with representatives from major mining companies, some 100 organizations and more than 50 countries will take stock of the situation of artisanal miners around the world. This year's main theme is "Artisanal Mining: an Opportunity for Rural Development".

The 2009 CASM Annual Conference will highlight how sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by artisanal miners are emerging in Mozambique, in Africa and other countries from other regions. It will show why and how political will is crucial – as the Mozambique experience illustrates – to formalize artisanal mining and transform a hazardous activity into a viable livelihood for millions of miners and their communities.

At least 20 million people in some 50 countries around the world, of which half of them are in Africa, engage in artisanal and small-scale mining, and a further 100 million people depend on it for their livelihood, almost always in appalling environmental and social conditions, according to CASM, a multi-donor global program supported by the World Bank Group, Dfid, Danida, and other donors.

"The Government of Mozambique recognizes the important contributions of artisanal and small-scale mining in reducing rural poverty, creating employment, providing diverse services, developing small industries and reducing the migration of our youth from the rural areas to cities by ensuring sustainable economic growth in these rural areas," said **Mrs. Esperança Laurinda Nheuane Bias, Minister of Mineral Resources**. *"We look forward to welcoming our guests and partners to this conference in Mozambique and to having fruitful engagements on the opportunities and challenges that we face in this sector."*

One of the major challenges facing governments of mining countries, the industry, civil society and the artisanal miners themselves is to find ways to boost the economic value and livelihood potential of artisanal mining and mitigate the often grim realities of life around the mines. According to CASM, there is a growing field of evidence mostly from Latin America but also from Asia and Africa that artisanal mining can become a viable trade and also contribute to the economic development of local communities and to reconstruction efforts in post-conflict countries.

Artisanal and small-scale mining offers important entry points into the priority challenges or Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the international development agenda: poverty reduction through income generation and employment creation; education and access to basic services; tackling the rising prevalence of HIV/AIDS; gender inequality and reducing hazardous child labor; improving governance and transparency; protecting the integrity of natural systems; as well as potential for conflict mitigation.

“The critical challenge for those working on the artisanal mining sector is to mitigate the negative impact and enhance the potential positive benefits associated with it,” says **Jon Hobbs, chairman of the CASM initiative and Dfid representative**. *“There are also direct links between improving the situation of artisanal and small-scale miners and achieving most of the MDGs.”*

In order to address some of these issues, the World Bank-led CASM initiative and its partners are helping establish positive and productive relationships amongst local communities, large scale mining companies and government agencies within an equitable and effective legal framework. CASM’s work program engages 35 other organizations in 25 countries across different regions, with potential benefits for thousands of people.

CASM is also looking to advance integrated social and economic development, including the utilization of environmentally responsible techniques in the exploitation of minerals. And it is also helping all relevant stakeholders to comply with international standards related to labor regulations and occupational health and safety.

“Mineral resources have the potential to re-activate development in post-conflict countries, and so it is crucial to improve the governance of such resources,” says **Gotthard Walser, lead specialist and program manager of CASM at the World Bank**. *“That’s why the work of CASM and its partners is vital particularly in resource-rich countries.”*

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On the Web:

To learn more about CASM and artisanal mining, please visit: www.artisanalmining.org

Background information:

What is artisanal mining?

Artisanal and small scale mining is the extraction and production of minerals and mineral products by hand methods and small scale low technology mechanized operations.

What is CASM?

The Communities and Small-Scale Mining (CASM) initiative was launched in March 2001 in response to an urgent plea persistently made at every international meeting on small-scale mining, for improved coordination between the various institutions working in this sector and for better integrated, multi-disciplinary solutions to the complex social and environmental challenges facing small-scale mining communities. CASM’s holistic approach to small-scale mining aims to transform this activity from a source of conflict and poverty into a catalyst for economic growth and sustainable development.

Donors/countries that support CASM

The main donors are the UK's Department for International Development and The World Bank Group, through its Development Grant Facility. CASM also receives support for a variety of its projects from other donors, including: Natural Resources Canada; Trust funds from Austria, Denmark, Netherlands, and Switzerland; and partners like the Global Mining Research Alliance.

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