

BACK INFORMATION ON THE MMSD CONSULTATION WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE WORKSHOP ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MINING SECTOR

27th–28th September, Quito, Ecuador

In cooperation with the Mining Policy Research Initiative (MPRI) and
Ambiente y Sociedad

This workshop is being hosted by the Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development (MMSD) Project of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). The workshop is being run in cooperation with MMSD's Latin American regional partner, International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) Mining Policy Research Initiative (MPRI) and the national coordinator in Ecuador, Ambiente y Sociedad.

THE CONCEPT OF THE WORKSHOP

The broad aim of the workshop is to facilitate discussion of the critical issues surrounding the relationships between indigenous peoples and the mining, minerals and metals sector.

This workshop intends to build on the progress made by indigenous peoples in the regional MMSD processes and in other instances, in order to facilitate discussion on common key issues that need to be addressed in the relationships between indigenous peoples and the mining, minerals and metals sector.

- The workshop will bring together between 20 and 30 people, predominantly, but not exclusively indigenous persons belonging to indigenous organisations and communities who have had direct experience with mining (both positive and negative), and a few key individuals who work with indigenous issues.
- Nominations for attendance will come primarily from MMSD's regional partners as a result of the regional processes. There will also be some room for nomination of indigenous persons to attend from outside the regional networks.
- The workshop is seeking to achieve a balance of attendees from indigenous peoples with a broad range of perspectives relating to mining and minerals development.
- The workshop is not the only opportunity to comment on and influence the work of MMSD in relation to indigenous people's issues (others are outlined below).

People will attend from a variety of geographic and cultural settings to address critical themes, to exchange ideas and to look for ways to progress on priority issues.

Ultimately, the workshop will address the potential for positive change that will better serve the interests of indigenous people in their associations with the mining sector.

OBJECTIVES

The workshop will run over two days, with an introduction on the evening before the first day. There will be a series of brief presentations, open sessions and breakout groups. There will also be opportunities for attendees to structure part of the workshop to address their priorities in an appropriate way.

For organisational purposes, several key themes have been identified. These themes however are not exclusive or exhaustive and it is hoped that participants will help guide the growth of the workshop as it progresses.

Some of these key themes include:

- A discussion of the meaning and application of key issues/rights for indigenous peoples (identity, territory, autonomy, participation and self-determination) and the importance of recognizing them as the basis of a sustainable development of mining and minerals in contexts of cultural diversity.
- Discussion of change in the relationships between indigenous people's and the mining sector

There are also several questions to be addressed including the following:

- Is the rhetoric of improved environmental and social performance creating a situation more considerate of indigenous peoples circumstances?
- Are there other factors that are changing the capacity of indigenous peoples to influence the course of events?
- How relevant are international conventions and charters for indigenous peoples in the context of mining and minerals development?
- What are the principles and practices that can create more equitable consideration of indigenous communities by industry, government and other stakeholders?
- How can such principles and practices be normalised to provide more sustainable outcomes for indigenous people in the area of prospective and operating mining projects?

- What are the priority areas of public and corporate policy that need to be addressed to facilitate this transition?
- What are the research and training requirements of indigenous peoples in order to participate equitably in this process?

LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT

The workshop format is designed to provide the opportunity for all indigenous participants to relate their circumstances and to express their views. There are comparatively few opportunities at the international level for indigenous people to come together and to interact around these priority issues. MMSD is mindful of both the timescales and complex internal consultative processes that many indigenous communities require to deliberate over such important issues. In this respect the workshop is not intended as a multi-stakeholder event, but as a forum for indigenous people to meet and discuss issues together.

It is recognised that making progress on indigenous peoples issues and relationships with the sector is a long-term process which requires long-term engagement and understanding. This workshop is one opportunity for indigenous people to present a perspective on issues of importance to them.

The Quito workshop however is not the only opportunity to influence the content of the MMSD report or the way in which the report develops around these issues. At the regional level, in South America, Australia and North America, the regional coordinators have held meetings and workshops with indigenous peoples, first nations and aboriginal groups. The regional reports themselves and the workshops held in each country are two additional instances in which specific issues raised and discussed with indigenous peoples are being made visible.

In addition, MMSD plans to host a second workshop (contingent on funding) at which there will be a range of attendees including indigenous people, industry, government, labour and others stakeholders to address issues of industry best practice and community development. It is hoped that the Quito workshop will produce some indigenous delegates to this multi-stakeholder meeting.

There will also be an opportunity to comment on the MMSD baseline study and other work on land and resettlement when these are released later in the year, these will be available in English and Spanish. Finally, independent submissions to MMSD on this and any other area of our work are welcomed. In particular, case studies of corporate approaches to working with indigenous peoples are actively encouraged.

A FINAL COMMENT

Attendees are not regarded as representing any group (unless specifically mandated to do so), but come instead as individuals who can speak to a wide range of experiences and knowledge of relationships with the sector. Further attendance at the workshop will not be construed by MMSD as support of the project or its objectives. The principles which guide the running of this workshop and other project activities are clearly outlined in the document 'MMSD Principles of Engagement' attached to this backgrounder. In particular the workshop does not seek to generate consensus or present the commentary of the workshop as in any way representing the position of indigenous peoples. It is meant instead, to reflect the opinions of knowledgeable people on circumstances that prevail in different parts of the world and the potential for improving the opportunities of indigenous people's in relation to minerals exploration and mining.