

Questions and Answers on the Global Dialogue

1. What is the Global Dialogue?

The Global Dialogue is a process that aims to establish a high level, intergovernmental forum of like-minded governments with an interest in the mining, minerals and metals sector. The Global Dialogue is a Type 2 Partnership initiative sponsored by Canada and South Africa at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg.

2. What is a Type 2 Partnership?

Type 2 Partnerships for sustainable development are non-negotiated, specific commitments by various partners intended to contribute to and reinforce the implementation of the outcomes of the intergovernmental negotiations of the WSSD (Plan of Implementation and Political Declaration) and to help achieve the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals. The Partnerships are of a voluntary, 'self-organizing' nature; they are based on mutual respect and shared responsibility of the partners involved. Partnerships are intended to serve as a mechanism for the delivery of the globally agreed commitments by mobilizing the capacity for producing action on the ground.

3. Why a proposal for a Type 2 Partnership on mining and metals?

As a Type 2 Partnership, the Global Dialogue expresses its link to the WSSD Plan of Implementation. The Global Dialogue aims to enhance the ability of national governments to lead in promoting the implementation of the activities proposed in paragraph 46 of the WSSD Plan of Implementation (see web site at <http://www.globaldialogue.info/paragraph46.htm>) particularly at the global level. In this paragraph, Governments, working collectively at the United Nations level, acknowledged for the first time the important contribution that the mining and metals sector can make towards sustainable development.

4. Why an intergovernmental partnership?

A majority of the activities proposed in Paragraph 46 fall within areas that are primarily the responsibility of national governments. While these can be implemented at the national level, they can often be best advanced from consideration at the global level. Moreover, many of the issues affecting the sector are currently being debated at the global level, frequently without the benefit or input by people with a full understanding of this sector. As well, national capacity may benefit from experiences of other governments. Governments with an interest in this sector do not have, at present, a functioning global venue or partnership for this purpose.

5. What is the Global Dialogue working on at this time?

The Global Dialogue, as announced at the WSSD, is a two-stage partnership. The first stage aims to prepare the establishment of the proposed intergovernmental forum. This first stage will be completed at the inaugural high-level meeting of the Global Dialogue to be held in February 2004, in South Africa. At that meeting, governments will decide on the various parameters of this intergovernmental forum, the priorities of the work program and will put in place the mechanisms to undertake this work. The inaugural meeting will mark the beginning of the second stage, the forum itself.

6. Who will decide what the Global Dialogue will do?

After having agreed to the Terms of Reference and the Rules of Procedure, the national governments will decide on the programme of work. Consistent with full respect of national sovereignty, all partners will have an equal opportunity to influence and decide on the make-up and work programme of the proposed intergovernmental forum.

7. Who is coordinating this stage one or preparatory process of the Global Dialogue?

Following the Summit, the partner governments agreed on the formation of a team to facilitate the establishment of the proposed intergovernmental forum. Canada offered to fund and support this facilitating team. Working very closely with the co-sponsor, South Africa, the team keeps all partner governments informed of developments, encourages the entry of new partners and prepares working drafts of documents for consideration and decision by partner governments. These documents cover the nature and function of the future intergovernmental forum and a proposed work program. The facilitator also arranges the preparatory and inaugural meetings.

8. What does it mean to be a member or a partner of the Global Dialogue?

Partners or members of the Global Dialogue are those countries that have signalled their support and interest in working together with South Africa and Canada to establish the proposed intergovernmental forum. At the inaugural meeting in February 2004, the nature, function and work program of the partnership will be formally defined. At that time, all partner governments will have the opportunity to evaluate the results of their deliberations and to confirm their decision to participate in the new defined partnership.

9. Capacity is an issue for many partner governments of the Global Dialogue; what will be the relation with organisations with the mandate for capacity building?

The partner governments will have the ability to draw on the experience and expertise of other participating governments. As well, the partnership document provided at the time of the Summit recognizes the need for a working relationship with these multilateral organisations that have a mandate relevant to this sector, including capacity building. It is expected that these organizations will be invited to participate as observers.

10. How can a global partnership help promote effective change?

For effective change to take place, approaches need to be tailored to the local conditions of each region of the world. That is why the Global Dialogue aims to build on and work in cooperation with existing regional intergovernmental organizations (Mines Ministries of the Americas, Africa Mining Partnership, APEC-GEMEED, etc). Because of the overlap between membership in the regional organizations and the Global Dialogue, there is an expectation of convergence on many priorities that need to be addressed. It is therefore expected that elements of the work program of the partnership may well be carried out on a voluntary basis by regional organisations. The Global Dialogue will provide the regional organizations with the ability to share experiences as well as bring global influence and status to their work.

11. How will other stakeholders be involved?

The Global Dialogue is intended to be a high-level forum for national governments. However, it is proposed that stakeholders (industry, non-governmental organisations and others) could participate as members of national government delegations. In this way, stakeholders will have an opportunity to register their views on issues to be included on the agenda and the position that their national government should consider. At the forum, they could also provide information to a collection of governments on policies or issues of concern on the agenda. In addition, the partnership could, where appropriate, decide to form advisory committees or working groups comprising stakeholders from the various national delegations.

12. Why have a mining/metals life cycle perspective?

Mining is not an end in itself. It takes place in order to produce the minerals and metals that society requires to meet its needs for products and services. What happens at any part of the life cycle, from mining to metals use, recycling or disposal, inevitably impacts the contribution of this whole chain of activities to sustainable development. There is, at present, no intergovernmental activity that can provide this type of sector life cycle and sustainable development perspective as well as understanding of the linkages that need to exist throughout in global policy making for the sector.

13. Why is sustainable development the scope of the Global Dialogue?

The scope is in response to the World Summit agenda and reflects the scope of Paragraph 46 of the Plan of Implementation. Moreover, a reference to sustainable development allows the partnership to address the full range of economic, social and environmental issues related to the sector.

14. Will the Global Dialogue make global rules or conventions?

The Global Dialogue will not have any authority to develop international rules, standards or conventions. However, based on its deliberations, it is expected that governments may elect to recommend or make suggestions to individual governments, intergovernmental bodies or to other stakeholders associated with the minerals and metals sector.

15. What can the Global Dialogue do that existing mining/metal sector organizations cannot?

A key issue for the sector is the lack of political recognition of existing activities and their resulting inability to be influential at the global level, particularly with intergovernmental policy-making fora and activities (UN, OECD, etc.). While there are many intergovernmental policy-making activities or fora, none has a mandate or knowledge specific to the mining/metals sector. Yet part of their mandates can cover elements (oceans, forest, trade, chemicals, waste, atmospheric emissions, etc.) that have implications for and impact on this sector. Currently, there is no sector-based link between these forums. The Global Dialogue will bring together people with extensive experience and understanding of the sector to register their views and to do so on the basis of a global intergovernmental mandate related to the priorities of the World Summit. It will promote a consistent life-cycle approach and more effective global policies better aimed at enhancing the contribution of the sector to sustainable development. The Global Dialogue fills a vacuum; it does not duplicate any other sector organizations.

16. There are already too many fora in the sector. Why do we need one more?

The Global Dialogue is intended to complement existing regional and sector-based activities, not duplicate them. Those with an interest in the sector will see the value in like-minded governments adding their collective views to bear on issues or policies, not to mention the possibility of facilitating access to key government decision makers, whenever appropriate. Given the number of international meetings associated with the sector, it is hoped that over time, some efficiencies can be achieved beyond just back-to-back meetings, such as some form of co-ordination.