IGF 20 YEARS

INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM
on Mining, Minerals, Metals and
Sustainable Development

The History of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF)

Secretariat hosted by

IISD

Secretariat funded by

Canada

Kingdom of the Netherlands

How did the IGF emerge as the global forum for more than 80 member countries advancing good mining governance for sustainable development?

Origins With the United Nations

The IGF originated at the United Nations (UN) 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. UN members with an interest in mining took action to raise awareness about the mining sector's importance for social and economic development, the value of minerals for modern living, and the need to enhance contributions from mining. The parties collaborated on paragraph 46 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which outlined the following priorities for stakeholders:

- addressing the environmental, economic, health, and social impacts and benefits of mining, minerals, and metals;
- enhancing the ability of stakeholders to play an active role in the sector; and
- supporting countries with financial, technical, and administrative capacity to govern mining operations.

A Novel Type of UN Partnership

Acknowledging the lack of a suitable global forum to advance the concerns and priorities of resource-rich countries as outlined in paragraph 46, Canada and South Africa spearheaded a UN Type II[1] partnership to fill the void. It was named the Global Dialogue on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development, and, from the outset, it was intended to be a platform for governments to share experiences and collaborate to advance sustainable development through mining.

A total of 53 countries participated in the Global Dialogue. Together, they decided that their objectives would be best achieved by establishing a more formal, member-driven intergovernmental forum for resource-rich countries. With support from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the participant nations held two preparatory meetings at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in 2003 and 2004. During these meetings, the parties negotiated terms and prepared to launch the new forum.

The IGF was launched in February 2005, with 25 countries as founding members and was recognized by the UN[2] as a Type II partnership linked to the Johannesburg summit.

Founding member countries in 2005

Bolivia	Mauritania
Burundi	Morocco
Canada	Niger
Dominican Republic	Nigeria
Eswatini	Philippines
Ethiopia	Romania
Gabon	Senegal
Ghana	South Africa
Guinea	Suriname
Kenya	Tanzania
Madagascar	Uganda
Malawi	United Kingdom
	Uruguay

The Government of Canada was the founding host of the IGF Secretariat, and it administered its operations for 10 years through Global Affairs Canada and Natural Resources Canada. In 2005 the IGF organized its first Annual General Meeting (AGM), hosted by UNCTAD at the Palais des Nations.

> "The Global Dialogue has our wholehearted support precisely because it seeks to engage governments in constructive discourse about the issues facing countries that aim to base their development on mineral and metals production."
>
> **LAKSHMI PURI**
> Director, Division on International Trade in Goods and Services and Commodities, UNCTAD, on June 1, 2004, at the Global Dialogue meeting at the UN Palais des Nations, Geneva

1 The Type II partnership model was developed at the Johannesburg summit to allow for more flexible and voluntary partnerships involving any combination of governments and other actors.

2 The IGF's Type II partnership was registered with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development.

THE IGF AND UNCTAD

UNCTAD has been an essential partner of the IGF since its inception, hosting and contributing to early foundational meetings leading to the IGF's creation. This partnership continues to the present day, with UNCTAD having hosted every in-person IGF AGM at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The annual gathering anchors the IGF's activities and has become an unparalleled event for convening and engaging policy-makers. It is also a forum for discussions, peer learning, and connection between representatives from industry, academia, international, non-governmental, and civil society organizations. As host of the AGM, UNCTAD is an instrumental IGF partner.

The IGF's Mining Policy Framework

At the 2010 AGM, IGF member countries ratified the cornerstone Mining Policy Framework (MPF), a compendium of best practices that support good governance in mining. Informed by the needs and experiences of IGF members, the MPF outlines how government can ensure the benefits of mining are optimized and equitably shared to maximize the sector's contribution to sustainable development.

Importantly, the MPF also provides a clear mandate for the IGF to work with governments to advance their sustainable development goals with effective laws, policies, and regulations for the mining sector. This work includes

- convening dialogues and events to advance best practices, peer learning, and engagement;
- guidance documents, research, and publications;
- in-country MPF assessments; and
- capacity building and technical training for governments.

The IGF's scope covers the full mining life cycle, from exploration to mine closure and post-mining transition, and projects of all sizes, from artisanal mining to large-scale operations.

The six pillars of the MPF

Laws, Policies, and Institutions

Financial Benefits

Socio-Economic Benefits

Environmental Management

Post-Mining Transition

Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining

IGF AND THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In accordance with its origins as a Type II partnership at the 2002 Johannesburg summit, the IGF reported on its activities and progress during the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) 18 meeting in 2010. The next year, the IGF submitted its newly ratified MPF at CSD 19 for consideration by governments and delegates from other organizations with an interest in mining. The IGF also presented a vision and proposed parameters for a greater UN role in mining, reflecting the views and interests of IGF member countries.

MPF assessments completed

- Bhutan
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Fiji
- Honduras
- Jamaica
- Kyrgyzstan
- Madagascar
- Mauritania
- Mexico
- Mongolia
- Namibia
- Panama
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Suriname
- Uganda

To date, the IGF Secretariat has worked with 18 member governments to assess their national frameworks against the MPF in two phases. The first is an MPF assessment, which includes an in-county visit and stakeholder outreach. It culminates with a published assessment report that identifies strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in existing mining laws, policies, and regulations and provides recommendations for improvement based on the best practices presented in the MPF. The second phase involves the IGF Secretariat providing capacity-building and technical assistance based on the assessment's findings and recommendations.

> "We noted with satisfaction growing support for a renewed UN interest in mining in the course of CSD 18. We believe that mines ministries, through the IGF and as demonstrated by its MPF, are ideally placed to play a key global advisory role on the full spectrum of mining-related issues."
>
> **IGF CHAIR (MALAWI)**
> at the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for UN CSD 19 on March 2, 2011, in New York City

Continuing Growth and Evolution

In 2015, 10 years after it was founded, the IGF's membership had nearly doubled to include 47 nations. In the same year, the Government of Canada decided to move the Secretariat's administration outside of Global Affairs Canada to better meet the needs of the growing IGF membership and the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Canada provided core funding to the International Institute for Sustainable Development to take over the Secretariat's administration starting in October 2015.

In 2021, the Government of the Netherlands joined Canada as a core funder of the Secretariat, allowing the IGF to broaden its work offerings and allocate more resources to help support governments in implementing the SDGs, including important issues such as gender equality, sustainable economic growth, climate action, and critical minerals for the energy transition.

New IGF members 2005–2015

Argentina
Botswana
Brazil
Burkina Faso
Cameroon
Egypt
Guatemala
Honduras
India
Jamaica
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Mali
Mexico
Mongolia
Mozambique
Namibia
Papua New Guinea
Peru
Russia
Sierra Leone
Zambia

New IGF members 2015–2025

Afghanistan
Armenia
Bhutan
Cambodia
Chad
Chile
Colombia
Comoros
Costa Rica
Ecuador
El Salvador
Fiji
France
Georgia
Germany
Guinea-Bissau
Guyana
Ireland
Islamic Republic of Iran
Laos
Lesotho
Liberia
Myanmar
Netherlands
Panama
Paraguay
Republic of the Congo
Rwanda
Saudi Arabia
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Sweden
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Togo
United States of America
Zimbabwe

Membership growth has continued, with more than 80 nations now sitting as IGF members, including most of the world's major mining jurisdictions. This growth reflects the increasing relevance of mining and the demand for better governance.

In 2022, the IGF began a multistakeholder process to update the MPF to meet its members' evolving needs—resource-rich countries face the prospect of increasing demand for critical minerals for the energy transition and calls for more inclusive and equitable practices to ensure better environmental, social, and economic performance. The updated MPF was ratified by IGF members at the 19th AGM in November 2023.

The IGF has become the leading intergovernmental policy forum on mining and sustainable development. This member-led, voluntary partnership is open to all UN countries working to use mineral resources to contribute to sustainable development.

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IISD

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is an award-winning independent think tank working to accelerate solutions for a stable climate, sustainable resource management, and fair economies. Our work inspires better decisions and sparks meaningful action to help people and the planet thrive. We shine a light on what can be achieved when governments, businesses, non-profits, and communities come together. IISD's staff of more than 200 people, plus over 150 associates and consultants, come from across the globe and from many disciplines. With offices in Winnipeg, Geneva, Ottawa, and Toronto, our work affects lives in nearly 100 countries.

IISD is a registered charitable organization in Canada and has 501(c)(3) status in the United States. IISD receives core operating support from the Province of Manitoba and project funding from governments inside and outside Canada, United Nations agencies, foundations, the private sector, and individuals.

IGF

The Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF) supports more than 80 member countries in advancing their sustainable development goals through effective laws, policies, and regulations for the mining sector. We help governments take action to develop inclusive and gender-equitable practices, optimize financial benefits, support livelihoods, and safeguard the environment. Our work covers the full mining life cycle, from exploration to mine closure, and projects of all sizes, from artisanal mining to large-scale operations. Guided by our members' needs, we provide in-country assessments, capacity building, technical training, publications, and events to advance best practices, peer learning, and engagement with industry and civil society. The International Institute for Sustainable Development has hosted the IGF Secretariat since October 2015. Core funding is provided by the governments of Canada and the Netherlands.

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