Mineral Certification: Certified Trading Chains (CTC) and the Analytical Fingerprint (AFP)

Newsletter 03/2011

Certification of Rwandan Mineral Producers

CTC compliance audits, conducted by an independent auditor in late 2010/early 2011 at five Rwandan mining concessions, evaluated the performance of several major Rwandan cassiterite, wolframite, and coltan producers and the associated mineral trading chains against the CTC standard set. The CTC standard set, last amended in August 2010, refers to twenty certification standards on mineral origin and traceability, mining conditions, and supply chain due diligence elements based on OECD and other integrity instruments, adapted to practical applicability within the central African artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) sector. Audit reports form the base for CTC certification by the Rwandan Bureau of Standards in March 2011. Executive Summaries of these audit reports will shortly be disclosed at the websites of Rwandan partner institutions.

Conference on Mineral Certification and Supply Chain Due Diligence in Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region in Kigali, March 17-18, 2011

The Rwanda Geology and Mines Authority (OGMR) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), supported by BGR and GIZ, are organizing a joint conference hosted by the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINAFFET) and the Hotel des Mille Collines, Kigali. The conference features a broad range of local and international experts presenting their views on supply chain due diligence evaluation of central African conflict mineral production and trade. During the conference, Rwandan mineral producers participating in the CTC scheme will be issued Certificates of CTC Progress or Compliance. An optional site visit to the largest Rwandan cassiterite mining operation, applying both artisanal and semi-industrial methods, will be organized for conference participants. An extensive CTC project review report will be distributed among delegates and will subsequently become available at the CTC website as well.

Harmonization Workshop and Mineral Certification Manual Validation in Kinshasa, DRC

On February 22-23, 2011, over 70 high-profile mining sector representatives, including the DRC government, industry, civil society, representatives of the UN, ICGLR, ITRI, GIZ, as well as the German, Belgian and US Embassies, attended a two-day harmonization workshop in Kinshasa on the certification of tin, coltan, wolframite, and gold supply chains in DRC. The overall objective of the workshop – organized by the German-Congolese cooperation project on mineral certification – was the appraisal and validation of certification manuals and standards as essential components of natural resources governance in DRC.

The certification manuals have been developed by a working group composed of experts from the DRC Mining Ministry and BGR. Certification-related benefits include mineral traceability and transparency, legalization of the mining sector, improved fiscal policies, optimal utilization of mineral resources for sustainable development, and conflict prevention.

Besides the manual presentation, workshop participants discussed complementary certification strategies and audit systems proposed by ITRI, ICGLR, and MONUSCO; recommendations stemming from these consultations will be integrated into the final certification manuals. The next steps of the German-Congolese cooperation project – after the lifting of the mining suspension in eastern DRC – will be to perform baseline audits at pilot mines participating in the project, compile an inventory of all artisanal mining sites, and, in cooperation with iTSCi, introduce a mineral traceability and tagging system.

Analytical Fingerprint (AFP) Progress Documented in Rwanda, Extended to DRC

The AFP method, developed at BGR, allows constraining the origin of tantalum (coltan), tin, and tungsten ore concentrates down to individual dig site level by defining distinctive geochemical, geochronological, and mineralogical signatures of specific ore production sites. The AFP reference database for Rwanda, progressively extended throughout 2010, now integrates samples of all Rwandan mineral producers participating in the CTC program. These producers will receive individual briefings on AFP characteristics of their minerals at a pre-conference workshop in Kigali on March 16, 2011.
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BGR experts will also be visiting Bukavu, South Kivu Province, to plan sampling activities at CTC pilot and other mine sites in eastern DRC, in collaboration with the German-Congolese cooperation project on mineral certification.

Meanwhile, AFP specialists have been in touch with Professor R. Hark of Juniata College, Pennsylvania, to discuss the capabilities of laser-induced breakdown spectroscopy (LIBS) in tracking down the origin of coltan and cassiterite ore on a regional scale. While offering less precise constraints on mineral origin than AFP, the LIBS method might be developed into a field-based technique complementary to AFP, with potential to provide first-order estimates on mineral origin; these might be followed up by AFP where a higher precision on mineral origin is required (i.e., in conflict-affected or high risk areas such as the Great Lakes Region).

New BGR project supports the ICGLR Regional Initiative Against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR)

Commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and aligned with a complementary project of German International Cooperation (GIZ), BGR has initiated a new project to support the implementation of the RINR tool set of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The project, with a scheduled runtime from 2011-2015, will support both the ICGLR secretariat as well as selected member states in successfully setting up a mineral certification mechanism. A central focus of the project will be to integrate the AFP technique into the RINR scheme to obtain independent evidence on the origin of conflict minerals. At the member state level, the project may build on the experience of the CTC Rwanda project (2008-2011) and provide further impetus to the implementation of the ICGLR mineral governance scheme at the national level. In cooperation with local and international partners, the project will further develop ASM formalization processes as a contribution to sustainable development in the Great Lakes Region.

About the G8 pilot project Certified Trading Chains (CTC) in Mineral Production, Rwanda

BGR and the Rwanda Geology and Mines Authority (OGMR) are implementing the CTC system in Rwanda as a joint pilot project, aiming to improve supply chain due diligence and good governance in the artisanal and small-scale mining sector.

http://www.bgr.bund.de/mineral-certification

About Analytical Fingerprint (AFP) for Conflict Minerals

BGR has developed a combination of analytical evaluation methods to independently track the origin of tantalum (coltan) ore concentrates produced in Central Africa. BGR has obtained encouraging results in advancing the development of a similar AFP scheme for tin ore (cassiterite) concentrates, and is planning to further extend the method to tungsten ore concentrates.

http://www.bgr.bund.de/mineral-certification

About Mineral Certification, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The mineral certification project in DRC is jointly being implemented by BGR and the DRC Ministry of Mines. It is part of the German-Congolese cooperation program to strengthen transparency and control in the Congolese mining sector. The certification project focuses on artisanal tin, tungsten, tantalum, and gold mining and mineral trade in eastern DRC.

http://www.bgr.bund.de/mineral-certification

About Support to the ICGLR Regional Initiative Against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources (RINR)

Since January 2011, BGR contributes to the German support program to the implementation of a regional mineral certification scheme of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). In addition to engaging in the development and harmonization of certification schemes for the Great Lakes Region, the project aims for the integration of the AFP technique into the RINR tool set.

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