

International Mining Symposium WISSYM 2023

Re-thinking mining remediation – Innovative approaches towards sustainability

25 – 28 Sep. 2023 | Dresden

CONFERENCE STATEMENT

The 5th Wismut Mining Symposium was jointly organized with VBGU and IAEA. Almost 200 participants from 15 countries shared their experiences and insights. The following seven key points condense the rich and multifaceted outcomes of the various field trips, lectures, panel discussion and break-out sessions.

1. The much-needed global transformation towards sustainable low-carbon societies and the associated sharp rise in the demand for metals and other critical raw materials require more mineral resources than ever before. At the same time, public acceptance for the required expansion of mineral extraction are at an all-time low. This leads to a resource dilemma that could cause the entire green transformation to fail.
2. Against this backdrop, it is essential that modern raw materials extraction projects fulfil current ESG criteria (environmental, social and governance) and make a verifiable contribution to global sustainable development. The Wismut project as well as encouraging remediation projects in Australia, Czech Republic, Peru, Portugal and the U.S. presented at the conference are proof of these efforts and examples of successful management of even the most serious mining consequences.
3. WISSYM 2023 made an important contribution to consolidating existing or establishing new strategic partnerships with key players in South America and Africa. With the support of IAEA, these activities are recorded and publicised at international level.
4. Past experiences provide a wealth of knowledge that can be utilised in new projects. The overarching theme of the symposium and the contributions to the discussion also show that innovative approaches are increasingly required in order to harmonise the economic requirements of raw materials extraction with current political paradigms and the changing expectations of civil society. One of the greatest challenges is to avoid leaving future generations with cost-intensive aftercare burdens. In this context, dedicated sessions and break-out groups discussed innovative technologies in the field of the water-energy-nexus, mine life cycle management, valorisation of mining residues in line with the UN SDGs and circular economy principles with a variety of encouraging results.
5. The Free State of Saxony, with its long and rich mining tradition, is the only federal state in Germany to have its own raw materials strategy. During the panel discussion, Prime Minister Kretschmer emphasized how this strategy is intended to actively support the revival of local mining. In view of this proactive role, it is proposed to establish Saxony and the neighbouring Czech Republic as a European competence centre for sustainable raw materials management with the support of Wismut, other relevant scientific institutions in Saxony and corresponding Czech partners.

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6. The state-owned company Wismut is prepared to actively use its expertise to support the national raw materials strategy.

7. Given the importance of mining and mine remediation, there is a need to improve political support and public visibility of this issue. To this end, it is proposed to consider the establishment of an international alliance of state-owned remediation companies, many of which already have long-standing relationships with each other. Such an alliance could consolidate the knowledge accumulated worldwide by issuing guidelines, setting standards and best practice procedures, while providing a platform for cooperation with international organisations at a global level.

Chemnitz, Nov. 16th, 2023

Management Board of Wismut GmbH