MINING & BIODIVERSITY

AN INDUSTRY VIEW

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Note:

These views are personal contributions to the debate, not Rio Tinto's policy. I have no mandate from the mining industry or any subset of it to speak on its behalf.

The Need for Mining

- Society needs to deliver real improvements in living standards for all of a global population which is set to double in 50 years, without collapsing the Earth's biological systems.

- Raw materials can come either from biological resources or from fossil fuels and non-fossil minerals.

- Minerals and metals have unique properties which mean that impacts can be significantly less than those of substitute materials.

- It is difficult to foresee an end to primary minerals production, even if resource consumption patterns are reformed and even if technology reduces demand for minerals.

- No-one has a right to mine, but society does have a right - a duty- to set equitable conditions on permission to mine.

- Equity means the sharing of the rights, responsibilities, risks and rewards of resources and development between all stakeholders in a fair and balanced way.

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Access to Land

- To continue to meet society's needs, the mining industry needs continuing access to land, but not without conditions.

- It also needs the informed consent of local communities for it to operate.

- It needs the approval of government for its development proposals.

- Management of biodiversity issues is a key element of informed consent affecting decisions relating to land access.

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Mining Impacts on Biodiversity

- The disturbance of land inherent in the mining process means that disruption of biodiversity is inevitable.

- With good planning and management this can be minimised.

- Uncontrolled secondary development can aggravate effects on local biodiversity.

- Other aspects of mining (water management, land management, poverty alleviation) can enhance biodiversity or reduce existing pressures on it.

- Compensation for biodiversity losses associated with mining projects should be considered, and might be delivered through offset mechanisms.

- It is realistic to aim for no net loss of biodiversity arising out of mining projects.

Protected Areas - 1

- **Mining is an inappropriate activity in some rare, fragile and unique ecosystems because some disturbance of land, societies and landscape is inevitable.**

- **Processes for designation, classification and management of these areas are not implemented consistently across the world.**

- **The current system of protected areas does not adequately address the need for development in poor communities.**

- **Strong, effective and equitable development and land-use plans should be the means of delivering biodiversity conservation objectives over areas much larger than the areas currently protected for this purpose.**

Protected Areas - 2

- For projects located in areas with higher biodiversity conservation and other values the risk of refusal to proceed with mining projects should be greater, up-front assessments should be longer and more costly, investments required for impact mitigation should be higher, and financial bonds should be in place to cover closure and emergency costs.

- No areas are "protected against mining" by this system, except by the higher costs and risks associated with operating in the most valuable and vulnerable areas.

- Such a system would reinforce what exists already - a strong presumption against seeking to mine in protected areas - and would cover larger areas.

- For communities affected by decisions not to proceed with mining projects other routes to sustainable development must be provided.

Conclusions

- **Mining and biodiversity conservation are not sworn enemies but can be natural partners in sustainable development.**

- **Government with justice and regulation with equity are necessary for this partnership to work.**

- **Mining and other development can be part of the solution to biodiversity conservation, not the problem.**