

1991 with the goal of generating analysis to help improve the environmental and social performances and competitiveness of mining companies in the context of increasing environmental regulation and technological innovation.

THE PATH FORWARD

The last two decades of the 20th century have been characterized not only by globalization, but also by a new sense of environmental awareness and social activism. The Brundtland Commission, which in 1987 coined the phrase “sustainable development”, along with the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, marked a transformation in how national governments, policy makers, consumers, and industry alike view industrial activity, trade, and the processes of consumption and production.

Canada is committed to ensuring that future development of its natural resource base is consistent with the principle of sustainable development. Not only must Canada meet its needs for minerals and metals today, it must also ensure that future generations are able to meet their needs as well. This challenge can only be met by all stakeholders working together, as partners. Everyone — governments, industry, workers, interest and environmental groups, and communities — has a stake in environmentally friendly and socially responsible mineral development.

In addressing the sustainable development of minerals and metals, there are a number of challenges ahead.

At the domestic level, countries are challenged to develop a policy, regulatory, and fiscal framework that will encourage innovation, increased productivity, trade, and investment in an environmentally sound and socially responsible minerals and metals sector. Industry is seeking to adopt and promote strong environmental stewardship over its day-to-day operations. Issues surrounding land use, access, and tenure must be addressed while maintaining the balance between the rights and interests of all stakeholders.

At the international level, some mineral-consuming countries are responding to heightened interest in environmental and health issues by proposing consumer restrictions and bans on certain mineral and metal products and their uses.

Governments must work together to ensure that new environmental and trade agreements and policy initiatives do not discriminate against metals and minerals and that decisions are taken, based on the best