

**Economy:** Mixed, private (majority) and public sector.

- 1995 GDP US\$7,130 million; US\$1,087 per capita; annual growth 3.72%.
- Agriculture 16.4% of GDP; manufacturing 13.8%; commerce 10.5%; services 12.9%; mining 5.6%; petroleum 4.3%.
- Exports in 1995 US\$1,150 million; 55% minerals, 27% hydrocarbons, 18% non-traditional (soya, wood, leather, coffee).
- Currency, freely convertible, is the Boliviano: Bs. 5.10 = US\$1.00 (August 15, 1996)

### **3. THE GEOGRAPHY OF MINING IN BOLIVIA**

Encompassing spectacular mountain ranges, high plains and tropical lowlands, Bolivia presents a highly diverse and interesting geology. Within a national territory of about 1.1 million square kilometers, six distinct geographic regions display different metallogenic qualities.

Andean geography occupies roughly the southwestern quarter of Bolivia. Three geographic and geological regions can be identified there. Stretching in a relatively narrow band along the southwestern frontier with Chile, the Cordillera Occidental or Western Range presents recent volcanic structures along with Tertiary dacites and andesites. This region is believed to offer considerable precious metals potential in epithermal deposits well-suited to bulk mining techniques. Large, high grade sulfur deposits also occur here.

Just to the east, the Altiplano stretches in a band some 700 kilometers long and about 130 kilometers wide. This intermontane basin, at an altitude of about 4,000 meters, runs from Lake Titicaca down to the border with Argentina. The Altiplano consists of Tertiary redbed sediments and volcanics. One volcanic complex near the city of Oruro has been developed as a massive open pit heap leach gold operation by Inti Raymi, a local company whose main shareholder is Battle Mountain Gold from the USA. Inti Raymis Kori Kollo mine represents Bolivia's most important gold development and is one of the most modern operations in the country. Southward beyond the town of Uyuni, another important bulk mining operation produces silver at Toldos.

One of the most interesting mineral deposits on the Altiplano is the Salar de Uyuni, a large salt lake containing the world's largest lithium deposit together with other elements in suspension. Other small salt and borate deposits are also found in the region.

The third Andean region, the Cordillera Real, forms the eastern rim of the Altiplano. Mountains of the Cordillera Real rise to 7,000 meters, including Illimani, which looms dramatically over the La Paz skyline. From the Peruvian border northwest of La Paz, this mountain range curves away south-southwestward to Argentina, gradually broadening to a width of some 100 kilometers. The geology of the mountain range is characterized by Tertiary intrusives and Devonian-Sulurian phyllites.