

Chapter 4: Prospects for the Industry

These reserves are more than adequate to meet production requirements in terms of net metal content. All tonnages can supply at least fifty years of output, except for primary gold which was estimated to last less than ten years [2].

However, reserves are classified as those minerals that are economically exploitable at current prices and with the available technology. Thus, the estimated reserves could have gone up after 1986 when metal prices started to inch upward.

Production Capacities

The copper industry has an operational milling capacity of 270,000 TPD of which 80% is being utilized. With the inclusion of non-operating copper mines, capacity utilization drops to about 60%.

Primary gold producers have a combined milling capacity of 10,000 TPD at full capacity utilization. Besides, there were no suspended operations in recent years.

The production capacity of the mothballed Nonoc nickel refinery is 34,000 Dmt. of nickel metal or 3,000,000 Dmt. of nickeliferous ore. The beneficiated ore producers contribute an additional 500,000 Dmt.

The production capacity for chromite producers can be estimated using the peak output through the years since industry participants come and go every year, with the exception of major producers with established milling capacities (see Table 4.2).