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- As we all know, **the energy transition will be metals and minerals intensive**. Estimations show that we might need to **supply more minerals and metals in the coming 3 decades than in total human history**. This is massive. We need of course plenty of metals but also, minerals such as sand and gravels – actually the world’s number 1 material extracted in terms of volume. For every wind farm, you need about half a ton of concrete.
- All around the world, we see interest from countries to re-start or develop mining operations, including in the pan-European region.
- The ESPOO convention and the SEA Protocol are key instruments to prevent and minimizing environmental impacts of mining activities, and the related infrastructure. We need to make these instruments more visible.
- I would like to take a step back, and look at what happens at the global level. There is a **high political momentum** on these issues. At the last United Nations Environment Assembly – the highest environmental political authority – a resolution on environmental aspects related to metals and minerals was adopted by all Member States. I had the honour to co-chair in 2023, together with Pakistan, an intergovernmental process that led more than 120 countries work together to develop proposals how to enhance the environmental sustainability of metals and minerals. These proposals were finalized in September in Geneva at the Global intergovernmental meeting on metals and minerals.
- Countries discussed challenges related to EIAs, sand, tailings. They referred to the important UNECE instruments – beyond the ESPOO convention, the Industrial Accidents convention, the Water Convention and the Aarhus Convention.
- I would like to mention 3 key proposals made by countries, relevant in our discussion today:
- First, countries expressed the need to set up a **Global Sand Observatory at UNEP-GRID Geneva**, to gather more data and knowledge with respect to our use of sand and the existing policies to make its management more sustainable.
- Second, the need to **assess existing instruments and standards related to minerals and metals**. Countries clearly felt that this is a very densely and fragmented landscape, with no overall framework, but constantly new industry standards being developed. They considered important to have a better understand of their effectiveness.
- **Third**, another key aspects, was the **need for more synergies and cooperation among existing international and regional conventions and processes**. For instance, a better connection between instrument such as the ESPOO convention and others.
- A follow-up resolution is being developed under the leadership of Senegal and Switzerland.
- I am happy to answer any question in this regard.
- Thank you.