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Responsible Gold Mining:

Q&A with the World Gold Council

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GLOBAL X

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Q&A with the World Gold Council

Topic: The Responsible Gold Mining Principles

The World Gold Council's **Responsible Gold Mining Principles** serve a useful reference for responsible mining. The following is a Q&A with John Mulligan, the Head of Sustainability Strategy at the World Gold Council, who helped us explore these concepts.

Interviewer

Roberta Caselli

Investment Strategist, Commodities

Guest

John Mulligan

Head of Sustainability Strategy at the World Gold Council

QUESTION ONE

What's the World Gold Council's role and why does responsible mining matter?

The World Gold Council represents the world's leading and most forward-thinking gold mining companies. We work to enhance trust in gold and promote its role as a strategic asset while advancing responsible and sustainable mining and business practices.

Responsible mining has become central to the sector because society increasingly expects companies and supply chains to demonstrate, in a credible and transparent way, not only that they operate responsibly, but also that they understand and manage their broader social and environmental impacts. For our members, responsible mining is fundamental to maintaining trust, securing a social licence to operate and creating long-term value.

The World Gold Council supports this agenda by promoting greater transparency, encouraging higher performance standards and helping to build a more resilient and sustainable gold industry that delivers value for a very broad range of stakeholders.



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QUESTION TWO

How did WGC define the Responsible Gold Mining Principles, and what makes them different?

The Responsible Gold Mining Principles (RGMPs) were developed through extensive consultation with investors, governments, civil society organisations, technical experts and the gold mining industry itself.

What makes them distinctive is that they were designed specifically for gold while providing a single overarching framework across the full ESG spectrum – governance, environmental stewardship, human rights, labour practices and community engagement. Gold also presents a number of unique challenges, including the scale and complexity of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), that were not always adequately addressed within broader sustainability standards.

Importantly, the RGMPs are mandatory for World Gold Council Members, who collectively account for more than half of global corporate/'costed' gold production. They are supported by independent external assurance and public disclosure, enabling stakeholders to assess performance in a meaningful and transparent way.

Another distinguishing feature is that, from the outset, they were intended for adoption by the wider gold mining sector rather than being limited to association members. (At the time, many industry standards were more closely tied to membership of a particular organisation.)

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QUESTION THREE

Sustainable Development: How do the principles contribute to sustainable development?

The Principles recognise that responsible mining should create benefits that extend well beyond the mine gate. They help companies create local employment, develop skills, support infrastructure, generate government revenues and contribute to wider economic development, while also managing environmental and social impacts responsibly.

The ultimate objective is to create enduring value for host countries and communities and, in doing so, contribute to progress against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The RGMPs were designed to consolidate and operationalise a range of international standards, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and OECD guidance, within a single framework that can be independently assured and publicly reported against. During their development, it was recognised that the SDGs provide a globally agreed set of sustainable development objectives, while the RGMPs provide a practical implementation mechanism through which gold mining companies can contribute towards achieving those objectives.

Through requirements covering employment, local procurement, economic development, human rights, environmental management, stakeholder engagement and transparency, the RGMPs support progress against a range of SDGs, including SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

A useful shorthand is that the SDGs describe the outcomes the world is trying to achieve, while the RGMPs describe the behaviours and management practices expected of responsible gold mining companies in helping to achieve them. While the RGMPs are not a direct SDG-reporting framework, they provide a credible and externally assured pathway through which companies can demonstrate their contribution to sustainable development.

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QUESTION FOUR

How might the mining principles evolve beyond 2030, when the current UN Sustainable Development Goals framework reaches its target date?

The Responsible Gold Mining Principles – and the Consolidate Mining Standard Initiative (CMSI) to follow - are not primarily intended as mechanisms for advancing the current SDG framework, even though they were both developed to be fully mindful of that context and aligned with the overarching objectives. Rather, they were designed as a long-term blueprint for responsible mining, grounded in enduring expectations and clear performance metrics around good governance, environmental stewardship, human rights, community engagement, and transparency. These principles/standards will remain relevant irrespective of how global sustainable development priorities evolve beyond 2030.

QUESTION FIVE

From Principles to Practice: What does implementation look like in practice?

Implementation means embedding responsible mining into the way a company operates every day, including at the mine site.

That includes strong corporate governance, robust environmental management, respect for human rights, meaningful engagement with local communities, effective management of water and tailings, and transparent reporting on performance.

The assurance, disclosure and transparency requirements are particularly important. Together, they ensure that the RGMPs function not only as a performance framework, but also as an accountability mechanism that supports continuous improvement over time.



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QUESTION SIX

How does the Conflict-Free Gold Standard help?

The Conflict-Free Gold Standard (CFGs) helps companies operating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas (CAHRAs) demonstrate that their gold production does not contribute to armed conflict or support parties responsible for serious human rights abuses.

The Standard is broadly aligned with international due diligence frameworks, including the OECD Guidance, and reinforces the sector's commitment to transparency, responsible sourcing and responsible business conduct.

Importantly, it recognises that responsible mining companies, when applying robust due diligence and operating with stability and security, can be part of the solution in high-risk environments. Their presence can promote legitimate economic activity, strengthen governance and support sustainable development in regions where responsible investment is often severely lacking but needed most.

The CFGS is now fully integrated into the Responsible Gold Mining Principles. However, it continues to retain value as a distinct reference point and remains an important milestone in the evolution of responsible sourcing standards within the gold sector.





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