

Mining Indaba 2026: ERG Africa and Entreprise Générale du Cobalt sign MoU to formalise responsible artisanal mining in the DRC



On the sidelines of the Mining Indaba, in the presence of His Excellency, Mr Louis Watum, DRC Minister of Mines, Eurasian Resources Group in Africa (ERG Africa) and the Entreprise Générale du Cobalt (EGC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening sustainable and responsible artisanal cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

This MoU forms part of a public-private partnership intended to enhance the formalisation, professionalisation and accountability of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). It provides EGC with mining rights over an exploitation area owned by ERG Africa and located in Lualaba Province.

While none of ERG Africa's production originates from ASM and will not do so in the future, the Group is committed, alongside EGC, Cobalt For Development Programme implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and local communities, to supporting the formalisation of this sector, which is crucial for the country's economic development

and entire supply chain transparency.

The pilot project within the MoU aims to establish a structured model that will improve the working conditions of artisanal miners and reduce the risks associated with informal mining (including human rights risks). It should strengthen social cohesion within surrounding mining communities, enhance environmental protection and ensure the traceability and security of the cobalt supply chain, in line with the vision of the Congolese Government.

The signing ceremony was attended by His Excellency Mr Louis Watum, DRC Minister of Mines; Mr Gino Buhendwa Ntale, Chairman of EGC's Board of Directors; Mr Eric Kalala, Chief Executive Officer of EGC; and Mr Davron Vakhabov, Chief Executive Officer of ERG Africa.

Implementation will be carried out in coordination with the Ministry of Mines, the Authority for the Regulation and Control of Markets and Strategic Substances (ARECOMS), SEAMAPE, and the CEEC, with the support of Gécamines. EGC will provide operational leadership, while ERG Africa will act as an enabling partner and GIZ as technical partners. A third-party operator will be appointed to oversee day-to-day operations, and public consultations will be held with local communities and civil society.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Davron Vakhabov, Chief Executive Officer of ERG Africa, stated, "At ERG Africa, we believe that legitimate artisanal mining plays an important socio-economic role in the DRC. Supporting the formalisation of ASM activities within the legal framework is essential to improving safety, transparency and community well-being. The signing of this agreement represents a concrete commitment in that direction. By combining the respective experience of the different parties, together with government support, we are laying the foundation for a model with transformative potential.

Mr Eric Kalala, Chief Executive Officer of EGC, emphasised, "By regulating and supervising artisanal mining on a defined site, we can ensure responsible operations that comply with both national and international standards, with the aim of developing a replicable, long-term model. I welcome ERG Africa's initiative to advance our efforts to formalise ethical artisanal mining, and I am confident that, with the commitment of all stakeholders, this initiative will succeed and serve as an example."

During his keynote address, His Excellency Mr Louis Watum, DRC Minister of Mines, commended the initiative saying: "For the DRC, the solution is formalisation, not exclusion. Our approach is grounded in OECD-aligned due diligence, traceability, and responsible sourcing, while responding

to the practical needs of battery manufacturers and OEMs for secure, ethical supply. A central pillar of this strategy is

Entreprise Générale du Cobalt (EGC), which has been mandated to organise artisanal cobalt production through designated ASM zones, structured cooperatives, controlled buying points, and compliance with safety and labour standards. This creates the conditions for traceable, verifiable supply that downstream buyers can trust. The State will continue to work with local leaders, cooperatives, and companies to ensure that formalisation goes hand in hand with livelihoods and dignity. This MoU shows that cooperation – not confrontation – is the most sustainable path forward.”

This initiative fully aligns with the priorities of the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Félix Tshisekedi, the Government of the DRC and the Ministry of Mines, in support of a more formalised and transparent mining sector that delivers sustainable and inclusive growth.