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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement submitted by Zhongguancun Green Mine Industry Alliance, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 May 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



From Extraction to Empowerment: Advancing the Right to Development Through Green Mining Transformation

The mining industry stands at a critical crossroads. On one hand, the accelerating global energy transition drives unprecedented demand for critical energy transition minerals—from lithium and cobalt to nickel and rare earth elements. On the other hand, extractive activities have historically been associated with environmental degradation, community displacement, and social tensions that undermine fundamental human rights. The challenge before us is not whether to mine, but how to mine in a way that advances—rather than compromises—the full spectrum of human rights.

As a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Zhongguancun Green Mine Industry Alliance has been actively engaged in advancing green mining standards and practices that place human rights at their core. The Zhongguancun Green Mine Industry Alliance was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2023, in recognition of research and actions in promoting sustainable mining development. We have previously submitted a Universal Periodic Review report on human rights protections in China’s mining sector to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and have consistently advocated for integrating human rights considerations into mining governance frameworks.

The right to development—enshrined in the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development—affirms that development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process aimed at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals. The mining industry, when properly governed, can serve as a powerful vehicle for realizing this right in resource-dependent regions. It generates employment, funds public services, builds infrastructure, and creates economic multipliers that lift communities out of poverty. The challenge lies in ensuring that the benefits are equitably distributed and that the costs—environmental, social, and health-related—are not disproportionately borne by vulnerable populations.

Green mining transformation offers a concrete pathway to reconcile economic development with human rights protections. Drawing from our experience in developing and implementing green mining standards covering key areas such as mine construction, resource comprehensive utilization, mine-site ecological restoration, smart mining, and sustainable mineral processing, we have observed that integrated environmental, social, and governance frameworks benefit both enterprise sustainability and the human rights of affected communities. Our standards have been developed through multi-stakeholder collaboration involving more than 40 institutions and over 100 experts, reflecting the collective wisdom of industry, academia, and civil society. These standards incorporate considerations of worker safety, community engagement, environmental protection, and post-mining land rehabilitation—all of which are directly relevant to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

The intersection of mining and human rights extends beyond environmental concerns. The right to water, the right to health, the right to adequate housing, the right to a safe and healthy working environment, and the right to participate in public affairs are all implicated in mining operations. In many resource-rich developing countries, mining concessions have historically been granted without meaningful consultation with affected communities, leading to conflicts that persist for generations. Green mining, properly conceived, requires free, prior and informed consent processes, transparent benefit-sharing arrangements, and accessible grievance mechanisms.

The United Nations Secretary-General’s Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals has rightly affirmed that “human rights must be at the core of all mineral value chains”. This principle must guide the governance of the rapidly expanding critical energy transition minerals sector. As the world pivots to renewable energy technologies—solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicle batteries—the demand for critical energy transition minerals will surge. If this demand is met through conventional extractive practices, we risk repeating and amplifying past human rights violations. If, however, the transition is anchored in green

mining principles and human rights standards, it can become a model for sustainable development.

We urge the Human Rights Council to take the following actions under Agenda Item 3:

First, encourage States to integrate human rights impact assessments into mining licensing and permitting processes, ensuring that economic development considerations are balanced with the protection of environmental and social rights.

Second, request the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to facilitate knowledge exchange among States, industry associations, and civil society organizations on best practices in green mining that advance the right to development, drawing on existing technical standards and community-based models.

Third, integrate mining-sector human rights considerations into follow-up mechanisms for the Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing that responsible mineral extraction is essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8, Sustainable Development Goal 9, Sustainable Development Goal 12, and Sustainable Development Goal 13.

Fourth, support capacity-building initiatives for developing countries to strengthen regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms in the mining sector, particularly in the context of critical energy transition minerals.

The human rights community has long focused on the risks of extractive industries. It is time to also recognize their potential—when properly governed—to contribute to the realization of the right to development. Green mining transformation represents one of the most promising pathways to achieve this alignment. The Zhongguancun Green Mine Industry Alliance remains committed to working with all stakeholders to advance mining practices that empower communities, protect the environment, and uphold the full range of human rights for present and future generations.
