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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.

[12 August 2026]

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



Protection of the Right to Health in Mining Development: Challenges and Responses

As a non-governmental organization with special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Zhongguancun Green Mine Industry Alliance (Z.G.M) has long been committed to advancing the global green transition of the mining sector and sustainable community development. The Alliance submits this written statement under Agenda Item 3, focusing on obstacles to the realization of the right to health in mining development and corresponding responses.

Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The right to health encompasses not only access to healthcare, but also fundamental conditions including safe drinking water, adequate food and a healthy environment. Nevertheless, mining activities pose systematic and severe infringements on the right to health of residents in mining areas.

Heavy metal contamination and acid mine drainage stemming from mining pollute surface water and groundwater, depriving communities of safe drinking water sources. Toxic substances such as lead, mercury, arsenic and cadmium enter the food chain through water bodies, triggering neurological damage, renal failure, cancer and developmental delays in children. In terms of air pollution, open-pit mining and ore transportation emit massive quantities of respirable particulate matter, driving a marked rise in the incidence of respiratory illnesses and silicosis among populations surrounding mining areas, with children, the elderly and pregnant women bearing the brunt. Land degradation and water pollution undermine agriculture and fisheries, eliminating residents' self-sufficient food supplies and sustaining high rates of child malnutrition.

Meanwhile, mine workers face prolonged exposure to dust and hazardous substances, leading to frequent outbreaks of pneumoconiosis and occupational poisoning. Millions of workers in the informal mining sector operate in a complete void of health safeguards. As the global energy transition accelerates the extraction of critical minerals, protections for the right to health have not been strengthened in tandem. A growing number of communities are turning into "sacrifice zones" for mining development.

Z.G.M calls for the integration of health rights impact assessments into the full approval process of mining projects, the formulation of stringent pollution emission standards coupled with independent monitoring systems, effective safeguards for the occupational health and safety of mine workers, the establishment of health compensation and medical assistance mechanisms for residents in mining areas, and mandatory remediation for pollution already caused.

The right to health is the foundation of all human rights. Z.G.M urges the Council to pay close attention to violations of the right to health arising from mining development, and ensure that development and energy transition do not come at the cost of people's lives and health. The Alliance will continue to promote the integration of green mine development and the protection of the right to health, and stands ready to share field observations and solutions from the industry.
