



**NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENERGY
LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES FROM
SOURCE TO MARKET

Natural Resources and Energy Briefing Note No. 1

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Introduction to the NREL and our Briefing Notes

Welcome to our first Briefing Note.

The Natural Resources and Energy Leadership Council (NREL) is a voluntary, cross-sector, interdisciplinary network of leaders working to analyze and solve sustainability challenges on a variety of natural resource and energy issues.

RESOLVE organized the NREL¹ to address complex challenges that require sustained, cross-sector collaboration and leadership to produce solutions. This is now more difficult in a world grappling with social fissures, cultural turbulence, economic volatility, and political unrest. In this climate, and given the issues we face, it is useful to have a forum that takes stock of progress and challenges; scans the social, environmental, and political horizon for “what’s next”; and identifies and advances solutions that require collective action.

We are hopeful that the NREL can help catalyze unlikely partnerships, support strategic creativity, and encourage the discovery and implementation of unexpected solutions.

Through our regular Briefing Notes, we will offer perspectives on many of the critical sustainability issues in the mining and energy sectors. To stimulate debate, we will share the diverse, sometimes divergent views of Council members and others. To catalyze action, we will identify next steps and, where appropriate, serve as a platform for dialogue and the formation of partnerships.

Over the next year Briefing Notes will cover a range of issues including: aligning and strengthening responsible sourcing and supply chain initiatives; defining the “climate smart mine” and the role of minerals in the energy transition; supporting efforts to address risks related to tailings; finding innovative solutions that address legacy and reclaimed sites; opening new policy space on climate response; strengthening the value proposition and business case for sustainability; modernizing planning to better coordinate among disciplines and account for cumulative impacts; addressing the role of gender in the sector; and taking account of materials innovation as we move toward a low-carbon economy.

¹ We wish to thank the World Economic Forum for inspiring the NREL. We are a legacy of the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on the Future of Mining and Metals and the Council on Decarbonizing Energy.

We invite you to take advantage of this new resource and engage with us on these issues. If you are receiving this Briefing Note and our periodic, curated news update, you are already part of our NRELC Network.

The Context

Despite progress made on the sustainability agenda by leading mining and energy companies, NGOs, and government, we see a lack of consensus across key stakeholder groups about a pathway for the future.

Today, in the view of the authors, relationships between industry and civil society are underwhelming, with a growing sense of mutual frustration at the lack of significant, positive progress—along with a few bright spots.

There are several potential causes:

- companies and NGOs tend to organize and work issue-by-issue, rather than under a broader sustainability framework;
- companies and NGOs are grappling with tensions within their associations and coalitions are pace of change and priorities, including on issues like defining and recognizing good industry practice;
- advocacy positions create useful tension, but it's challenging for both industry and civil society to negotiate to find solutions that relieve this tension, particularly in this climate; and
- the rate of change in the policy world is accelerating (e.g. recent rapid shifts in the policy space on the role of carbon removal) and it's difficult to keep pace.

There are positives to build on. A recent survey of our networks found that stakeholders seek stronger company-NGO collaboration.

It's critical to take full advantage of previous work and current initiatives. The International Council on Mining and Metals, the Mining Association of Canada, and some leading energy firms have taken concrete productive steps on issues like site-based performance and tailings; there are efforts to advance assurance systems for mining as well as for oil and gas; many in the energy sector are engaging with civil society on CCS and a price on

The NRELC

The [Natural Resources and Energy Leadership Council](#) (NRELC) at RESOLVE is designed and organized to help our networks navigate sustainability issues in the natural resource and energy sectors.

The NRELC is composed of a diverse group of senior level stakeholders and experts with industry, civil society, academic, government, and philanthropic experience, all committed to the sustainable development, production and use of minerals, materials and energy.

Our **vision** is a world in which society meets its mineral, energy, and materials needs in a manner aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, including a Low Carbon Economy.

Learn more about the members of the [NRELC](#).

carbon; and new partnerships are emerging to promote responsible sourcing such as initiatives for cobalt and lithium. Encouraging examples include the recent partnership between Apple, Alcoa, and Rio Tinto to produce zero-carbon aluminum; the work of the World Economic Forum’s Global Battery Alliance to support a sustainable value chain for batteries; and efforts by the Chamber of Mines in Argentina² and RESOLVE to support the responsible development of the lithium sector as demand for batteries grows.

The Opportunity— Strengthening Cross-Sector Engagement

Today, we see a unique opportunity to further catalyze and support dialogue, innovation, and partnerships. Just as mining leadership rallied under the [Global Mining Initiative](#) to place sustainability firmly on its agenda, this is a moment for mining and energy leaders – across sectors and supply chains – to organize under a sustainable materials banner, with the energy transition as a key point of reference and accelerant. This will require a hard look at the challenges we face as well as a grounded optimism about the role of these sectors in a sustainable future.

Our Approach

Partnerships across the value chain must be built to sustain themselves over long periods despite shifting political and economic winds.

The NRELC will work with and support leaders across mineral and energy supply chains, and their financiers and investors, to help incentivize and reward improved performance and highlight the sustainable materials narrative. This includes helping civil society recognize good work and practice when and where it occurs; assisting lenders and investors who are looking at the societal impacts of their portfolios, from BlackRock to specialized Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) funds; and engaging constructively with the responsible sourcing agendas of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), retailers, and customers, including those focused on climate. We will support thought leadership, offer strategic guidance and convening power, encourage collaborative strategies, programs, and tools, and seek to bolster engagement with key government agencies.

We see an opportunity for the materials and energy sectors and their stakeholders to respond to and take full advantage of the following drivers:

- Mining and energy stakeholders support a global, multi-sector commitment to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.
- Downstream companies as well as lenders and investors have become a key part of the mining, energy, and materials narrative with their own sustainability goals and responsible sourcing and investing programs.
- There is a growing recognition of the positive role that minerals can play in the energy transition. In addition to the minerals they produce, mining and energy companies will play a role in the energy transition by promoting renewables at sites or in nearby

² Cámara Argentina de Empresarios Mineros—CAEM.

communities, de-carbonizing during the transition, and promoting land and resource use that takes account of climate targets and the SDGs.

- Recent research by the World Bank, the latest IPCC report, and other analysis points to the critical role of carbon removal in a successful energy transition, and mining, oil and gas companies have a potentially important role to play.
- The growing role of indigenous rights-holders in decision making and an increased focus on the role of industry in addressing human rights presents challenges and opportunities.
- Changing societal attitudes, interests, and perspectives, including with regard to Millennials and Generation Z point to the need for the sector to become hyper-transparent, enhance accountability, and address social inequality and the effects of negative externalities.
- The speed and breadth of the technology revolution, and the need to help those potentially left behind, will be an issue broadly and for the sector.

We will embrace the positive changes around us—new technologies, greater supply chain awareness, the contribution of the mining and energy sectors to sustainability issues, including climate response, and new approaches to partnership with host communities—while also working to better identify and counter negative trends.

Contact

We are excited to get underway and invite you to engage with us.

Please contact Stephen D’Esposito, Britt Banks, or Gillian Davidson with any questions about this document, to provide input, or request further details.

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To identify colleagues for future updates, please email Margaret Lee at RESOLVE (mlee@resolv.org), with the subject line “Addition for NRELC Network”.

We will continue to send you period updates with links to key news items and initiatives. You can also opt out of this mailing by contacting Margaret at the above email address.