

**Address by
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**Plenary session:
*The extractive industries and protected areas***

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I am here as chairman of Rio Tinto and chairman of the International Council on Mining and Metals. ICMM has been in a process of dialogue with IUCN about mining and biodiversity which culminated in our recent commitment neither to explore nor mine in World Heritage protected areas.

Many of you won't know much about ICMM. This is not surprising because the organisation is only two years old. There is some curiosity, I know, about the motivation of the companies involved, so let me try to explain our thinking.

The gestation period for ICMM began five years ago. Leaders of ten of the world's largest mining companies met in London. We discussed how our industry was misunderstood and misrepresented. Some suggested we needed an education campaign. Others said a PR campaign. But others said: "We've done all that. It doesn't work. What we have to do is change perceptions by changing our behaviour."

In other words, we didn't get very much agreed. Perhaps that happens in IUCN as well.

But we met again subsequently and this time we did agree. We agreed that the performance of our industry had too often been unacceptable; that some of the criticisms levelled against us were fair.

In short, that we had better establish a sensible dialogue with some of our critics and resolve to improve our performance, so that we became part of the solution, not part of the problem.

All this gave birth to the Global Mining Initiative and the Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development project, and at the end of the MMSD process, we formed ICMM to carry forward the agenda. ICMM's first

secretary general – well known to many of you – was Jay Hair, who very sadly died ten months ago.

The original discussion in London was between ten companies.

Participation in the MMSD was much higher, about 30. We now have 15 members of ICMM – including most of the biggest companies – but only those which have consciously committed to try to provide leadership in meeting the challenges of sustainable development and have signed up to the principles governing ICMM.

So we start with a view of sustainable development. We all face a formidable challenge if we are to alleviate the plight of those in poverty and to achieve this without collapsing the environmental foundations of the economy. The global population has risen from 2 ½ billion to 6 ½ billion since I was born and is likely to rise to 9 billion by the middle of this century.

Without economic development, there will be no poverty reduction, nor will sustainable livelihoods be created. And experience also makes it clear that without economic development, there will be no improvement in our protection of the environment. I shall return to this point a little

later because it seems to me that the conditions which enable and encourage economic development are very similar to those that result in protection of the environment.

Mining and metals play an essential role in economic development, so for better or worse the industry is here to stay. It seems to me that the industry and the conservation movement should recognise that whilst our objectives will never wholly coincide, we have a substantial common interest in managing biodiversity as much as possible, and we would all benefit from the development of land management strategies which are consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

I do not need to tell this audience that the creation and effective management of parks and protected areas requires investment. Long term investment. But it also requires a lot more and I would have to say that much of what it needs is exactly the same as what industry needs to achieve economic development. We both want:

The rule of law

Access to impartial justice

Definable and defensible property rights

Incorrupt public administrations

Democratically accountable politicians

Stability – economic, political, social and legislative.

The list goes on. The fundamental conditions which enable and support social investment are the same as those that support commercial investment. We should have a common interest in creating those conditions wherever possible.

As we go through the 21st century the pressures on biodiversity are going to grow, as are the pressures to generate the economic development necessary to meet the legitimate expectations of a growing population.

We know from the recent work of Conservation International that, even if the world's existing network of protected areas were fully effective, much of the most threatened biodiversity lies outside those boundaries. So don't let's focus solely on protected areas.

But, we also know that the protection offered by the existing network of parks and protected areas is far from effective in many places, where

neither the financial resources nor the governance capacity for effective protection exist.

Let me move finally to the IUCN protected areas classification system.

It may be the best we have but there are problems with it in terms of consistency and scientific basis, which you all know better than I.

As it becomes increasingly difficult in the real world to offer actual protection on the ground, might it not be time to look again at what economic activities, including mining, might be compatible with conservation and the sustainable development agenda? In what places, and under what conditions can we generate both the resources and the capacity to deliver effective protection?

I do not underestimate the difficulty of this challenge for this audience and I am NOT in the least suggesting that the mining, or other industries, should have access to protected areas, anywhere at any time.

But I am suggesting that the current dialogue on principles and best practice should inform joint dialogue and action at a local level.

You will also understand that ICMM's recent position statement on mining and protected areas and the undertaking made by ICMM member companies not to explore or mine in World Heritage site protected areas is just a start.

We have shown purpose and intent here.

At the end of the Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development project just over a year ago, there was no such consensus on a "no go" policy at any level. Today, we have one and the opportunity should be taken to build on it.

ICMM also recognises that a strengthening of the current IUCN system of classification could lead to a more analytically robust and practically effective basis for defining some further categories of protected areas as "no go" areas – and others with a multiple use designation.

But if the dialogue that we have begun is to come fully to fruition, I hope that you too will be prepared to re-examine the fixed positions of the past.

In both the conservation community and my industry we face problems of great complexity as we seek to navigate our way into and through the 21st century. We could face these problems separately in the mood of distrust and hostility that characterised the past.

Or we could face them as we have begun to do more recently in a mood that recognises that between our real and legitimate differences there are areas of obvious mutual interest. There is an opportunity for people of goodwill on both sides to make constructive progress.

Thank you.

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