

Press release

N°01/AFREWATCH/2024

Lubumbashi, 26 February 2024

AFREWATCH welcomes the commitment of Générale des Carrières et des Mines (Gécamines) to make five mining plots available to its subsidiary Entreprise Générale du Cobalt (EGC) as part of the formalization of the artisanal cobalt mining sector, and calls on the parties to be more transparent

African Resources Watch (AFREWATCH), a non-governmental organization for the promotion and protection of human rights working in the natural resources sector, welcomes the signing of the agreement between Générale des Carrières et des Mines (Gécamines) and Entreprise Générale du Cobalt (EGC) to meet one of the major challenges of formalizing the artisanal cobalt mining sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and calls on the parties to show greater transparency and common sense in the management of five mining plots, which should really be transformed into Artisanal Mining Zones (AMZ) and allocated for the benefit of artisanal miners through EGC.

Under the terms of the agreement, which has not yet been made public, EGC will benefit from **exclusive** mining rights over five mining squares, enabling the company to strengthen its role in the process of formalizing artisanal cobalt mining in the DRC.

From its creation to the present day, the success of the formalization of artisanal cobalt mining in the DRC and the operationalization of the EGC depended largely on the creation of ZEAs, viable sites that Gécamines has just made available to the EGC, artisanal mining cooperatives, mining operators and the Congolese state.

For AFREWATCH, the conclusion of this agreement is the umpteenth opportunity for the long-awaited formalization of artisanal cobalt mining in the DRC and the operationalization of EGC, which has a monopoly on the purchase, processing and marketing of artisanal production. Thanks to this agreement, EGC will now be able to take advantage of these 5 mining squares to improve the living and working conditions of artisanal miners.

Be that as it may, AFREWATCH fears that, for want of adequate transparency mechanisms and common sense in management, the mining squares may benefit, as always, the politically exposed individuals who control the sector through their cooperative entities and who are the real beneficiaries.

In view of the above, AFREWATCH recommends:

To Générale des Carrières et des Mines and Entreprise Générale du Cobalt de :

- Make public the agreement signed on 7 February 2024 in Kinshasa with EGC on the exclusive use of 5 mining areas by EGC;
- Make public information on the 5 mining squares, in particular their names and locations;

At the EGC in :

- Reassure themselves that the artisanal mining sector will be included in the scope of the EITI as soon as the EGC is operational) to strengthen transparency through rigorous declarations of technical data by all the players involved;
- Set up a transparent mechanism for converting squares into ZEAs and allocating cooperative companies to ZEAs to enable the process of formalizing the artisanal mining sector in the DRC to be relaunched.