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Statement

by

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at

Critical Raw Materials:

Strategic Competition and US-Europe Innovative Approach

Bratislava, 29 May 2023

16h-17h | Executive Living Room, Grand Hotel River Park

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Critical raw materials are crucial for achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The EU has identified 30 critical raw materials essential for the European Green Deal and digital agenda. The G20 recognizes their importance in transitioning to a net-zero emissions economy, but sustainable supply and management pose challenges. **Collaboration and multilateralism** are crucial in addressing dependencies and strategic competition.

I want to draw your attention to **three central and perhaps overlooked issues** in Critical Raw Materials (CRM) supply that are vital:

1. first, Responsible and Ethical Sourcing;
2. second, Accelerated Progress towards Circular Economy; and
3. third, International Cooperation and Capacity Building.

Let me unpack these three aspects a bit more.

Responsible and Ethical Sourcing

Sourcing minerals and materials responsibly is crucial for sustainable development. It aligns with UN principles and helps achieve

sustainable development goals. Fair labour practices, including safe working conditions and fair wages, are **essential for upholding human rights and promoting social justice**.

To ensure responsible sourcing, it is essential to practice **environmental stewardship** by minimizing the impact of resource extraction and production. Sustainable practices such as reducing pollution, preserving biodiversity, and mitigating carbon footprint are crucial. By incorporating environmental considerations into sourcing practices, we contribute to preserving our planet for future generations.

Moreover, **social responsibility** should be the foundation of our sourcing efforts. We must interact with local communities while respecting their rights, cultural heritage, and economic well-being. Responsible sourcing empowers communities by providing economic opportunities, fostering inclusive growth, and enhancing social cohesion.

Responsible sourcing builds trust with consumers and aligns with UN's sustainable development goals. Fair labour practices, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility promote a sustainable world.

Circular Economy and CRMs

The transition to a low-carbon and circular economy is not just a choice but a **necessity for a sustainable future**. At the heart of this transition lies the critical role of CRMs. Understanding the significance of CRMs and their responsible management is key to achieving the goals of a circular economy.

To transition successfully, we need to reduce waste and maximize resource efficiency. By recycling and reusing materials, we can reduce the need for extraction and preserve our planet's finite resources. Effective waste management systems are key to achieving this goal.

The circular economy brings innovation, jobs, and resilience by reducing reliance on scarce resources and mitigating environmental risks. It promotes economic prosperity and environmental preservation.

International Cooperation and Capacity Building

International cooperation is crucial for sustainable resource management. By sharing knowledge and resources, we can address complex challenges and create a sustainable future. No one can do it alone, so working together is essential.

Sharing knowledge and experiences is key to international cooperation. Collaboration among nations, research institutions, and industry leaders fosters a culture of continuous learning. Capacity building, including technical assistance, training, and financial support, is essential for sustainable resource management and promotes long-term positive change.

In this regard, I would like to highlight **two valuable tools the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has developed: the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) and the United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS)**. These frameworks provide a common language and standardized resource evaluation and management approach. They promote transparency, collaboration, and sustainable development by enabling us to assess resource potential, plan effective strategies, and make informed decisions.

The UNFC and UNRMS are being embraced by the European Union, African Union, and other countries globally. These tools promote international cooperation, transparency, and sustainable resource management.

To achieve sustainable resource management, collaboration and

capacity building are paramount. Utilizing tools such as UNFC and UNRMS is imperative in promoting transparency and sustainable development for the betterment of present and future generations. Let us act now to secure a sustainable future.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the importance of responsible sourcing, circular economy, and international cooperation. These three pillars should be given priority for sustainable resource management. Adopting ethical practices, promoting recycling, and building capacity are crucial in achieving the United Nations' sustainable development goals. Let us collaborate towards a future where resources are utilized responsibly, waste is reduced to a minimum, and prosperity is shared fairly.

Thank you for your attention and commitment to building a sustainable future.
