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**NOTE**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the Republic of South Africa on a Strategic Partnership on Sustainable Minerals and Metals Value Chains

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Delegations will find in the Annex the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Union and the Republic of South Africa on a Strategic Partnership on Sustainable Minerals and Metals Value Chains.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND  
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ON A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ON  
SUSTAINABLE MINERALS AND METALS VALUE CHAINS**

**Context**

The European Union (EU) and the Republic of South Africa (RSA) are firmly committed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, and the goal of keeping global warming below 1.5 °C. The EU and RSA (hereinafter “the Sides”) are also committed to just transition pathways towards global net-zero emissions, to enhanced competitiveness, and socioeconomic growth, in line with the Africa’s Green Minerals Strategy by the African Union (AU), the South African Critical Minerals and Metals Strategy, the EU Green Deal, Clean Industrial Deal and the Critical Raw Materials Act. They recognise that the development of strategic cleaner value chains of minerals and metals is equally important to work towards a digital transition and economic security. The Sides are committed to a cooperation model that supports economic growth, sustainable development, industrialisation, beneficiation of minerals and metals<sup>1</sup> in the source of the extracting country, partnerships with local industries and decarbonisation in a manner consistent with their respective needs and concerns of economic development.

The Sides recognise the need to harness minerals and metals value chains<sup>2</sup> in order to meet these objectives and commitments for mutual benefit.

Within the above context, the Sides wish to establish a Partnership on Sustainable Minerals and Metals Value Chains (hereinafter “the Partnership”) and are signing this Memorandum of Understanding (“the Memorandum”) for this purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> To this memorandum of understanding all non-fossil fuel minerals are covered.

<sup>2</sup> Minerals and metals value chain covers exploration, extraction, processing, refining, recycling.

## Objectives

The Partnership provides a framework for the Sides to build secure sustainable minerals and metals value chains between the EU and RSA that support the clean energy and digital transitions and are relevant for other key industrial sectors such as aerospace and defence and to promote cooperation across the entire minerals and metals value chain ecosystem<sup>3</sup>.

Concretely, the Partnership, based on mutual benefits, aims to support the following objectives:

- a. Identify and jointly develop industrial projects of mutual interest and benefit along the entire value chain, from mining to processing, refining, recycling and their supply chains, including by facilitating business missions, business-to-business links and supporting investments in sustainable industrial projects.
- b. Enhance economic and industrial integration of the Sides in the sustainable and strategic minerals and metals value chains.
- c. Enhance cooperation across the entire minerals and metals value chain ecosystem, including capital goods, consumables and services.
- d. Undertake joint work to boost investment opportunities in South Africa along the minerals and metals value chains, that promotes value addition and beneficiation, starting with projects of common interest already identified for inter alia production of rare earth elements and manganese and enabling infrastructure.
- e. Develop open, fair and competitive markets for raw and processed minerals and metals, to develop South Africa's domestic minerals and metals value chains, including beneficiation and supply-chains, and enable the EU to diversify its suppliers for materials necessary to achieve the green and digital transitions and its economic security and resilience objectives.
- f. Closely cooperate on environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards for the minerals and metals value chain and coordinate in international *fora*, where appropriate.

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<sup>3</sup> Minerals and metals value chain ecosystem includes mining and processing capital goods and services.

- g. Foster closer cooperation on research and innovation within the minerals and metals value chains in collaboration with research and innovation ecosystems focused on advancing exploration and discovery, earth observation, innovative extractive, processing, refining, and recycling technologies in South Africa and the EU.
- h. Promote innovative and digital technologies and services for mining and other investments along the minerals and metals value chains.
- i. Support skills development and capacity building in South Africa through technical training, education partnerships, and knowledge exchange to ensure local workforce readiness and inclusive growth across the minerals and metals value chains.

### **Principles and scope of the Partnership**

The Partnership aims to facilitate strong multi-level government-to-government and government-to-business dialogues with the participation from relevant representatives from the EU and its Member States, South African government and from both Sides' companies, business associations, non-government organisations, and other financial, scientific, technical, and educational institutions and investors, as mutually decided by the two Sides.

The Partnership covers the entire minerals and metals value chain - exploration, extraction, processing, refining, recycling, processing of extractive waste and their supply chains (particularly mining and processing equipment and plant - capital goods).

The Memorandum sets the political framework and the shared intention to enhance cooperation in the following five areas of collaboration:

1. Integration of sustainable minerals and metals value chains, including networking, joint facilitation of investments (e.g. via joint ventures), industrial projects development, creation of new business models and promotion and facilitation of trade and investment linkages.

2. Mobilisation of funding for the development of soft and hard infrastructures required for investments and implementation, and for leveraging private sector financing to address trade and investment barriers, improve investment climate and inclusiveness, and regulatory predictability.
3. Cooperation to promote high ESG criteria including transparency, traceability, responsible sourcing, and human rights due diligence, and to improve policy and regulatory alignment, especially on sustainability standards, permitting procedures, and reporting requirements.
4. Capacity building, training and skills development in South Africa that is responsive to the demand and supply forces along minerals and metals value chain.
5. Cooperation on research and innovation between South Africa and the EU along the minerals and metals value chain, including on minerals knowledge and the minimisation of environmental and climate footprint.

## **Implementation**

The EU - South Africa Strategic Partnership provides an overarching framework, while the Joint Cooperation Council (JCC) constitutes a forum for monitoring the implementation of this non-binding Partnership.

In order to implement this Partnership, the Sides intend to:

- a. Establish an officials' level minerals and metals value chain bilateral Dialogue, reporting to the the EU-SA JCC.
- b. Organise meetings of the bilateral dialogue on a regular basis and as necessary, to take stock of the Partnership's progress in the implementation of the above-mentioned areas of collaboration, discuss possible new strategic collaboration directions and endorse the Roadmap for the upcoming period.

- c. Share requested information by the Sides, as appropriate, to enable implementation of this Partnership.
- d. Within 6 months from the signature of this Memorandum, the sides will develop a Roadmap, which will include specific operational actions in each area of collaboration. It would engage stakeholders from both sides and would identify the leading organisations to implement each action.
- e. Discuss any other matters as decided by the Sides.
- f. Implementation of this MoU will always be subjected to compliance with both South African and EU legislation and policies.

### **Status of the Partnership**

The Partnership is not intended to and does not create legally binding rights or obligations under international or domestic law. Moreover, nothing in this Memorandum represents a commitment of financing on the part of either Side. All exchanges will comply with South African and EU legislative frameworks and relevant laws and policies for both sides, and that confidentiality agreements will be concluded before any data transfer.

Furthermore, this Memorandum does not intend to represent any commitment from either Side to give preferential treatment to the other Side in any matter contemplated herein or otherwise.

In the process of implementing the Partnership, the Sides intend to ensure mutual protection of each other's interests, including of information that is confidential for the public authorities and companies concerned.

The Partnership may be modified by mutual written consent of the Sides. The Partnership may be discontinued by either Side giving at least six months written notice to the other Side. The Sides should consult to determine how to deal with any outstanding matters. The activities described in this Memorandum are to commence on the day after it has been signed by both Sides.

Signed at Johannesburg on XXX November 2025.

**For the European Union**

**For the Republic of South Africa**

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