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African Summit (AS)

Topic 1: Leveraging Africa's Critical Mineral Resources for Domestic Economic Development

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The African continent is rich in natural resources. Since early civilizations, Africa has been a hub for mining and trade in valuable commodities such as gold, salt, and ivory. The colonial era, characterized by foreign powers' pursuit of raw materials such as rubber, copper, and diamonds for export, left an indelible mark on the continent's economic development and its relationship to its natural resource wealth. Although African nations have since gained independence, colonial practices that continued well into the 20th century left a legacy of limited domestic processing capacity, infrastructural deficiencies, and economies heavily reliant on raw commodity exports. Consequently, many African countries reap far less economic benefit from their abundant natural resources than they potentially could[1].

Today, many African nations still grapple with economic instability, corruption, conflict, and underdevelopment, which hinder economic growth and prosperity. Yet, as technological advances and the global transition to renewable energy drive unprecedented demand for critical minerals such as cobalt, lithium, and copper, Africa is in a particularly advantageous position. These minerals, essential to the production of electric vehicles, batteries, and other modern technologies, are found in significant quantities across the continent.[2] The challenge, therefore, is how African nations can capitalize on this growing global demand to transform their natural resource wealth into lasting domestic economic development and prosperity.[3]

African States face two main challenges in their quest to capitalize on their natural resources. First, they must develop the infrastructure, technological expertise, and industrial capacity necessary to process these resources domestically. Second, they must carefully navigate their relationships with foreign powers, whose investments are critical to many African economies, but whose economic interests may be threatened by the expansion of domestic

[1] https://unctad.org/news/how-africa-can-harness-critical-mineral-wealth-revamp-economies
[2] https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-africa-can-benefit-from-the-global-mineral-rush/
[3] https://africarenewal.un.org/en/magazine/critical-minerals-can-power-africas-structural-transformation

industries.[4] Delegates must therefore consider how African nations can balance attracting and retaining foreign investment with the desire to retain greater control over their natural resources and ensure that their exploitation contributes to long-term domestic economic growth.

Some guiding questions for research:

1. What critical mineral resources does your country possess, and how does it currently benefit economically from their extraction and export?
2. How can African nations best industrialize to develop the processing mechanisms needed to manufacture critical minerals domestically?
3. How can African nations gradually reduce their dependence on foreign investment while maintaining the international economic partnerships necessary to sustain their economies in the short term?
4. What role can regional cooperation between African nations play in maximizing the economic benefits of the continent's critical mineral resources?
5. What responsibilities do the international community, including your country, and corporations have when investing in Africa's natural resource industries?

Remember to stay true to your country's stance, and remember that papers flagged for improper AI usage will not be eligible to win awards. If you have any questions, thoughts, concerns (or just want to say hi), feel free to reach me at rhirt1@mail.yu.edu. Looking forward to an incredible conference!

Sincerely,

Rachel Hirt

Chair, African Summit

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[4] https://thesciencesurvey.com/editorial/2023/07/21/neocolonialism-the-remnants-of-foreign-exploitation-in-africa/