

CONCEPT NOTE

The Africa Gem, Jewelry Exhibition and Conference – AGJEC

1.0 BACKGROUND

Africa is a key producer of a variety of colored gemstones. Most countries in the continent have several occurrences of these often precious and semi-precious stones that are highly sought after in the jewelry industry. Of notable instances are Ethiopia's Opals, Kenya's Tsavorite, Madagascar and its Sapphires, Mozambique's rubies, Tanzania's Tanzanite and Zambia's Emeralds. Despite having deposits of these gemstones, and some of these deposits being exploited through artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) with a high level of women participation, the African countries that harbor them and the miners do not benefit from the high prices that gemstones fetch internationally. Practitioners have come to realize that a majority of gemstones found in the international market are from ASM operations.

There are several reasons why the ASM miners do not realize full value from mining gemstones. One key issue is the lack of market knowledge. Most of the miners possess little knowledge of the value of the commodity in the market. They also do not have adequate knowledge of the supply chain and rely on brokers who exploit them to give them a valuation.

Lack of skills in grading, cutting, and polishing these gemstones is also a key issue. The miners will sell rough stones to brokers who will then cut and polish and sell them at exorbitant prices to jewelry makers. International jewelry designers as well, do not trust that Africans have the skills and expertise to cut and polish to their standards. They prefer to buy rough gemstones from the brokers and send them to their own gemmologists who have knowledge of the "European or American" cut.

This disenfranchises the miners who would have realized greater incomes from selling value added gemstones. African countries lose out as well on the opportunity of having a thriving gemstones industry that could spawn or support other economic linkages, create jobs – especially for women and youth, as well as generate higher income from the exportation of value-added stones branded as originating from their countries.

The Africa Mining Vision (AMV), which was adopted by African Countries in 2009, is the blueprint for inclusive and sustainable development of the continent's mineral resources sector to underpin broad based development. Among other things, the AMV requires local value-addition to minerals to maximize the impact of the mining sector in the social and economic transformation of African countries.

Globally, consumers are becoming more discerning and are increasingly seeking jewelry made from ethically sourced metals and gemstones. Additionally, the requirement by some Western countries for their business communities to only deal with responsibly sourced minerals, has led jewelry designers to seek direct contact with local miners to establish and authenticate the origin of gemstones.

Local gemstone brokers/dealers have also attempted to address the supply chain issues by organizing gem fairs or travelling to international fairs mainly in Asia to attract buyers. However, the locally organized events tend to be uncoordinated and modest. Though commendable, these efforts have not been able to address the market dynamics for ASM miners as they still rely on brokers to take their gemstones to these international fairs. Still, the trade dividends of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are on the horizon. But to ensure these benefits, African countries must fully integrate responsible/ethical sourcing of gemstones into their minerals governance regimes to facilitate direct sourcing by jewelry designers particularly from ASM miners. Also, governments must work together through cross-border initiatives and harmonization of regulation as well as with the miners to safeguard human rights, prevent environmental degradation and eliminate child labor.

Therefore, there is need to create a common platform for the various stakeholders in the gemstones and jewelry supply chain on the continent to address the dynamics and challenges of the sector, engage in meaningful policy conversations, whilst also pursuing practical initiatives on responsible sourcing of gemstones and jewelry from Africa and innovative solutions for local value addition.

2.0 THE AFRICA GEMSTONE, JEWELLERY EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE (AGJEC)

The Africa Gemstone, Jewelry Exhibition and Conference (AGJEC) aims to showcase the wealth of gemstone occurrence in Africa and to provide a platform to foster value creation, maximization and intra-African trade opportunities from Africa's gemstones. AGJEC will focus on Member States' support for their women miners and traders, and women-led artisanal and small-and-medium-scale enterprises (ASMMEs) and associations will get a platform to showcase their gemstones and jewelry in the exhibition pavilion which will create a marketplace for local, regional and international buyers to source directly from the countries of origin. In line with the promotion of responsible sourcing of gemstones and jewelry from Africa, this will be an opportunity for women miners and jewelry entrepreneurs to network with players in the supply chain and learn the dynamics of the trade. It is also expected that through this interaction, the women miners, traders and women-led enterprises in the gemstone and jewelry sector will better appreciate the benefits and opportunities in localized value addition of gemstones.

Alongside the trade fair, AGJEC will also feature a two-day conference that will bring together a range of stakeholders from Member States, large scale gemstone miners, ASMMEs, civil society, investors, various private sector associations, researchers and academia. The conference will cover relevant and topical issues concerning gemstone mining and the supply chain dynamics with the aim to maximize value for ASM producers and producing Member

States by linking ASM miners with jewelry production and the entire gemstone value chain. Speakers will be drawn locally, regionally and internationally to provide insights on the diverse topics in the program as well as participate in thought provoking panel discussions to render expert opinions on industry trends to guide policymaking and business.

AGJEC is designed based on the format of existing gemstone and jewelry events on the continent. Case in point is this is the 2nd iteration of AGJEC-Lagos though the 3rd annual edition of the Gold & Gemstone Conference and Exhibition led by Women in Mining Nigeria (WIMIN). It is particularly a pleasure for AMDC to see AGJEC-Lagos continue to grow as Nigeria is a fully ratified Member State of the AMDC Statutes. It may be recalled that the inaugural continental edition of AGJEC was held in Ndola, Zambia which is another fully ratified Member State of the AMDC Statutes. Some of the event highlights will include:

- A breakfast for policy makers and industry leaders to delve deeper and explore various subjects that affect the gemstone trade in Africa especially with regards to the attendant value chains.
- Themed technical training workshop sessions will run in tandem with the delivery of the conference, focusing on topics such as gem identification and valuation, an introduction to gemology, geological properties and characteristics of gemstones with renowned trainers being sourced to facilitate these sessions.
- A networking cocktail event combined with a gala dinner. It will feature a reward ceremony for the winners of the gem cutting competition

2.1 Objectives of AGJEC

The objectives of the Africa Gem, Jewelry Exhibition and Conference (AGJEC) include:

- 1) To host and effect policy conversations and guidance on the ASM supply chain dynamics of the African gemstones and jewelry sector in line with posturing to take full advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with a focus on Women's participation and involvement in developing continental ASM value chains.
- 2) To prompt innovative ideas for promoting and incentivizing value addition of gemstones and jewelry across the value chain from discovery to marketing
- 3) To foster and promote responsible sourcing of gemstones and production of jewelry within Africa
- 4) To provide for a holistic continental platform and marketplace for gemstone and jewelry ASMs and related ASMMEs to exhibit and sell their products and services.
- 5) To incentivize continental trading and skills exchange with the aim to take advantage of the AfCFTA
- 6) To enhance the visibility of Africa as a gemstone and jewelry producing hub to international dealers and jewelers
- 7) To ensure that all the above are conferring towards the delivery of the African Commodities Strategy within the tenets of the Africa Mining Vision

2.2 Conference Venue

AGJEC-Lagos 2024 is envisaged to take place from the 24th – 28th of September 2024. Nigeria is renowned for its potential in solid minerals and in particular gemstones, gold production and a budding jewelry industry awaiting further investment. Also, within the context of the nuanced continental calendar of coordinated gemstone and jewelry events on the continent, as mentioned, Zambia hosted the first iteration for the Southern Africa Region. Similarly, Lagos, Nigeria hosted the first iteration for the West Africa region in September 2023. It is envisaged to secure hosts for the Inaugural Central and East Africa Regional events. Whilst Egypt already hosts an event for the North Africa Region, the NEBU Expo for Gold & Jewelry, with the possibility of hosting another AGJEC-headliner in 2024. These events will all form part of the AMDC-led gemstone and jewelry calendar of regional-focused AGJEC events.

2.3 Timeframe

The proposed dates for the Lagos iteration are September 24th-28th, 2024. Through collaboration with Women in Mining Nigeria, it will be preceded by the 2024 AWIMA board meeting.

Tentative Calendar of Gemstone and Jewelry Events for 2024

AMDC will for 2024, organize the AGJEC series in collaboration with requisite partners and stakeholders with the indicative table below highlighting the tentative months in mind. The AMDC remains under discussions with stakeholders in Ethiopia, Kenya and Egypt to agree on tentative dates for the iterations in Eastern and Northern Africa respectively.

2.4 Participants

The targeted participants are:

- 1) Artisanal and Small-scale miners and ASMEs
- 2) Women Associations and Small-scale miners Association
- 3) Governments and policy makers
- 4) Large scale miners
- 5) Development partners
- 6) Mineral dealers and traders (local, regional and international)
- 7) International, regional, and national jewelers and jewelry houses
- 8) Equipment suppliers and technology experts
- 9) Gem Laboratories
- 10) Civil Society
- 11) Academia and researchers

2.5 Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the event are:

- 1) Database of participants created and available online
- 2) Documented deals or transactions initiated or concluded
- 3) Documented requests from governments for support to gemstone sector
- 4) Documented number of those in need of further training in key skills in value addition.