

Faith Principles for Sourcing Transition Minerals

Transitioning to a renewable energy economy is necessary and must be accomplished in a way that builds a fossil-free supply chain, protects the environment, and supports human and labor rights. One phase of such a transition is the sourcing of minerals for renewable energy technology, both in the U.S. and overseas.

This transition must work for all, especially communities that have been and continue to be harmed by the fossil fuel era. This includes Indigenous communities whose land has been taken for mining, oil and gas. They now face the greatest risks of water and air pollution and loss of sacred spaces, since the majority of U.S. and global reserves of cobalt, copper, lithium, nickel and other transition minerals are located on or near Indigenous people's land.

Those of us who are Christians recognize that our Church has played a role in these harms through centuries-old decrees and practices that justified violent land dispossession and enslavement and led to other injustices over time. We fear that the energy transition, without proper protections in place, is becoming another face of colonization and exploitation first approved by the Church in the 15th century.

While this history especially compels Christians to take a stance, all people of faith have sacred texts and teachings promoting justice and care for Earth that inspire us to move intentionally in a different direction as a society. We can envision a future in which all communities have clean air and water, decision-making authority over development that might impact their health and livelihoods, and legal recourse for any harms they experience from mining and processing of minerals.

We recognize that there is a tension between local opposition to mining and the national and global push for technological fixes that include increased mining. And we can't ignore that we are complicit in generating demand for minerals. So we advocate for a radical reduction in consumption, with policies like expanding equitable public transportation to reduce single-car use. As people of faith, we also need to lead in addressing the spiritual crisis that hinders our relationship with the Earth and with each other.

When sourcing of new minerals does become necessary, we hope that these principles can serve as a measuring stick for analyzing policies, educating our networks and policy makers, and finding alternatives to unprecedented levels of mining.

We hope that these principles can be especially useful in discussions around domestic reforms, such as updating the 1872 mining law; mineral agreements between the U.S. and other countries; and international climate and biodiversity negotiations.

Principles

1. Communities located on or near proposed mining sites must be invited into active participation in decision-making, from the earliest point of the process through its completion.
 - Mandate Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for Indigenous communities located on or near proposed mining sites, with thorough engagement of all voices.
 - Grant communities the right to say “no” at any time to mining projects.
 - Implement clear complaint and response mechanisms for individuals and communities claiming harms from mining operations.
2. Governments and companies must implement strong and enforceable labor and environmental standards and protection of human rights for the duration of the mining process
 - Require third-party verification of compliance with government standards.
 - Recognize the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and nations in setting higher regulatory standards that cannot be undermined.
 - Ensure accountability to other agreements, such as the Escazu Agreement in Latin America that enshrines the rights to access information about the environment, public participation in environmental decision-making and protection of environmental defenders.
 - Grant government bodies the authority to remove from consideration for mining any land that has special environmental, cultural or religious significance.
 - Ensure that communities who agree to mining benefit in some way, whether that’s through financial compensation, development of needed infrastructure, jobs and job training, technology transfers, debt relief or other means.
3. Governments and companies must research, implement and promote less extractive methods of sourcing minerals, such as recycling and reuse of metals, minerals and batteries. Companies must also be held accountable for the full life cycle of their products.
4. Mining operations must minimize greenhouse gas emissions in the mining process to the greatest extent possible.
5. Accurate information about mineral supply chains must be available to local communities and consumers. This includes transparency of both the origins of

components of products and the end use of minerals (such as whether they are destined for the energy transition, for armaments or for other purposes).

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