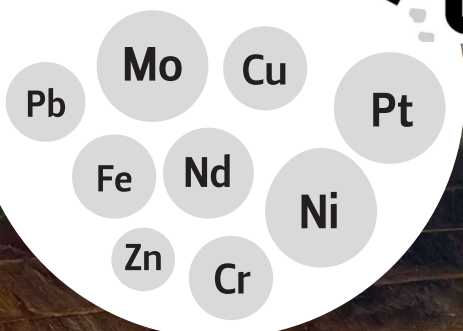


8th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT



CRITICAL MINERALS AND THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

4,5 and 6 November 2025
University of Siena, Italy

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CRITICAL MINERALS AND THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

The global shift toward renewable energy systems has intensified demand for critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements. These resources are essential for solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles, and battery storage. Yet their extraction often exacerbates inequalities within and between countries, environmental degradation, and human rights violations in resource-rich developing countries. This contradiction challenges the right to development, a universal human right affirming that all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from civil, political, economic, social, cultural, as well as environmental progress (UN Declaration, 1986¹).

To address these tensions, this conference draws inspiration from the principles outlined in 'Resourcing the Energy Transition - Principles to Guide Critical Energy Transition Minerals towards Equity and Justice' by the United Nations Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals, a landmark document which emphasises the following principles:

Human rights must be at the core of all mineral value chains.

The integrity of the planet, its environment and biodiversity must be safeguarded.

Justice and equity must underpin mineral value chains.

Development must be fostered through benefit sharing, value addition and economic diversification.

Investments, finance and trade must be responsible and fair.

Transparency, accountability and anti-corruption measures are necessary to ensure good governance.

Multilateral and international cooperation must underpin global action and promote peace and security.



The 8th International Conference will interrogate how these principles can assist in realising the right to development in mineral governance, ensuring that the energy transition fosters just, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable futures. By embedding the right to development into critical mineral governance, this conference aims to transform the energy transition into a force for global justice and equity. It will challenge extractive paradigms and champion models where mineral wealth becomes a catalyst for shared prosperity, ecological renewal, and human dignity.

Following this background, the Free State Centre for Human Rights, University of the Free State, South Africa, in collaboration with the Department of Law and Political Science, University of Siena, Italy, the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa, the Human Rights Center, University of Dayton, USA, Universidade Autonomia de Lisboa, Portugal, and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights present the eighth International Conference on the Right to Development under the theme “critical minerals and the right to development.” This Conference scheduled to take place at the University of Siena in Italy from 4 to 6 November 2025, aims to delve into these pressing issues and achieve the following key objectives:

- ***Promote Sustainable and Responsible Critical Minerals Supply Chains***

Encourage exploration, production, and processing of critical minerals in ways that are environmentally responsible and socially equitable and foster the development of resilient, diversified, and transparent supply chains to support global clean energy transitions and reduce resource dependency risks.

- ***Advance the Right to Development and All Human Rights***

Facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue on how the extraction and use of critical minerals can support the right to development and other human rights especially for resource-rich but economically disadvantaged countries and explore innovative approaches to ensure fair redistribution of benefits, compliance with the rule of law, and respect for all human rights throughout the minerals value chain.

- ***Strengthen International Collaboration and Partnerships***

Build stronger partnerships between resource-producing and consuming nations, as well as with international organisations, industry, and civil society, to bridge the North-South divide and create mutually beneficial outcomes through all forms of international cooperation including South-South and Triangular cooperation.

- ***Enhance Transparency, Accountability, and Good Governance***

Promote transparency and traceability across the critical minerals value chain to combat corruption, human rights abuses, and environmental degradation.

- ***Empower Indigenous Peoples, as well as Local Communities and Foster Inclusive Development***

Ensure that Indigenous Peoples, as well as local communities, benefit from critical minerals development through job creation, capacity-building, and equitable sharing of economic gains.

The conference will bring together academics and researchers, legal professionals and practitioners, policymakers and government officials, activists and representatives from civil society organisations and NGOs, community leaders, students and young professionals interested in critical minerals, and development issues from critical, interdisciplinary, and contextually engaged perspectives. We welcome contributions that focus on the following sub-themes or any related topics:

- Right to Development, Human Rights and Participatory Development
- Human rights and sovereignty over critical minerals and all natural resources
- Sovereignty and Global Equity in Mineral Governance
- Human Rights and Social Justice in Critical Minerals Development
- Critical Minerals and Energy Transition
- Environmental Justice as a Development Imperative
- Policy, Regulation, and International Cooperation in Critical Minerals environment
- Critical mineral development, climate goals and Sustainable Development Goals.
- Gender, Inclusion and disability-inclusive approaches to critical minerals
- Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining
- Redistributive Justice and Economic Empowerment

FORMAT STRUCTURE

The three-day conference will follow a hybrid format and is scheduled to take place from Tuesday 04 November to Thursday 06 November 2025 with opportunities for individual and/or group presentations organised in panels. The conference will feature keynote speeches by renowned experts, panel discussions on thematic areas, and networking sessions. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in dynamic exchanges, share their research and experiences, and forge collaborations, partnerships and networks for future actions.

Submissions that demonstrate originality and relevance will be considered for an edited volume or special issue to be published in an accredited and peer reviewed journal.

TIMELINE

Individual/Group Presentations: Submit a short abstract of no more than 300 words and a short CV/bio (150 words) to Gerard Kamga at kamdengkamgaga@ufs.ac.za and cc Ms Natasha Kabaso@nkabaso77@gmail.com on or before **17 August 2025**.

Notification of Accepted Abstracts and Panels for the Conference: 01 September 2025.

Conference in Hybrid Format (online and on-site): 04, 05 and 06 November 2024.

Submission of Full Selected Papers for Double Blind Peer-Review: 22 December 2025.