

Argor-Heraeus and UNIDO sign memorandum to promote mercury-free technologies in small-scale mining

Mendrisio, July 13, 2016. Argor-Heraeus, one of the leading Swiss gold refineries, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) have signed a joint memorandum aiming to reduce the use of mercury in artisanal and small scale mining. Thus, Argor-Heraeus makes an important contribution to the aim of promoting sustainable small-scale mining and strengthens the economic situation of local miners.

“We offer artisanal and small scale mines that are committed to responsible and sustainable gold mining direct access to the world market at fair prices and without intermediaries”, says Dr. Wilfried Hörner, Co-CEO of Argor-Heraeus. “Clear regulations in the producing countries are very important but comprehensive conditions for environmentally and socially sustainable gold mining can only be created in combination with strong economic incentives for small and medium sized businesses.”

Through direct access to the world market, local miners not only achieve a fair selling price for the mined gold, but are also offered a reliable partner outlet for their product – an important motivation to forgo the use of mercury. Phaedon Stamatopoulos, Director of Refining and Bank products and Project Manager at Argor-Heraeus sees additional advantages: "By eliminating intermediaries and enabling the reliable identification of the gold's origin, the whole supply chain becomes more transparent. Potential risks are easier to monitor and mitigate."

The memorandum was signed by representatives of Argor-Heraeus and UNIDO on Wednesday, July 6, 2016 in Vienna. Now the intense work on the practical implementation starts. "I am convinced that the partnership with Argor-Heraeus makes an important contribution towards achieving our long-term goals. Together we are committed to responsible and sustainable production processes along the entire value chain", says Li Yong, Director General of UNIDO.

About UNIDO:

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization comprises of 170 member states, including Switzerland. Main objective of the UN organization is to promote and accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development in developing countries and economies in transition as well as encouraging collaboration on global, national, regional and sectoral levels. One focus lies on the institutional development of local small and micro-enterprises, trade capacity building and the ability to meet the standards of international markets for a successful participation in world trade. For this purpose, UNIDO works with a vast network of partners and experts.

<http://www.unido.org/unido-united-nations-industrial-development-organization.html>

About Argor-Heraeus:

Argor-Heraeus Group, founded in 1951, is one of the world's largest processors of precious metals. Through its headquarters in Mendrisio (Canton Ticino, Switzerland) and the international branches in Germany, Italy and Chile, Argor-Heraeus refines gold, silver, platinum and palladium, transforms finished and semi-finished products for the banking, electronics, chemical, watch, and jewellery industries, and provides support services for precious metals trading. The Group's main objectives have always been the creation of added value, innovation and compliance along the entire value chain, from the mine to the consumer, in favor of all stakeholders involved.

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