

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Tantalum-Niobium International Study Center (T.I.C.) Addresses a Global Witness Report Criticizing the ITSCI Programme

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A recent report by Global Witness focused on shortcomings in the ITSCI due diligence programme. The T.I.C. maintains that there are no perfect schemes, due diligence or otherwise, and only with time, self-scrutiny and best practices' development are opportunities for improvement identified and implemented. The fact that a report may find instances where bad-actors found their way around the system does not negate the significant positive impacts that the ITSCI scheme has made on the lives of artisanal miners; or the fact that it remains the best available programme, as determined by member usage, for assisting those who want to comply with the OECD Guidance. These points were not sufficiently highlighted in the report.

In the report, Global Witness also suggests that the ITSCI scheme has facilitated both the smuggling of DRC mineral resources through Rwanda, during the early days of the scheme, as well as the smuggling of DRC material within the Congo from non-certified mines to certified mines, as of late. The report unfortunately fails to point out that such a rigorous programme brings an increased risk of smuggling due to the fact that qualified material is much more valuable than unqualified. To negate the positive effort and outcomes of that effort was a serious oversight, and to impugn the original intent was unprofessional, unnecessary and inflammatory. The T.I.C. vehemently denies any nefarious intent, on its part, in support of the early development and implementation of the ITSCI scheme.

With regards to competitive schemes, the T.I.C. wholeheartedly supports any viable due diligence scheme capable of meeting the comprehensive requirements of both the tantalum industry and its customers. The T.I.C. believes fair competitive practices benefit all stakeholders in the supply chain, and fully supports users' freedom to select the scheme they feel best meets their needs, free of coercion of any kind. The T.I.C. also notes that the tantalum industry has been at the forefront of adopting and implementing independent auditing for provenance certification to ensure the integrity of supply. The T.I.C. also finds it strangely convenient that while many unnamed "industry experts" were contacted in the preparation of this report, its President, Dr Daniel Persico, was not similarly contacted. We will continue to review the report and address individual issues as necessary.

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About the Tantalum-Niobium International Study Center (T.I.C.)

Since its inception, the Tantalum-Niobium International Study Center (T.I.C. or the Association) has grown and developed to encompass the changing nature of the tantalum and niobium industries and will continue in the same spirit in facing future challenges. After initially focusing on just tantalum, in 1986 niobium joined the association and today our membership represents every aspect of the global tantalum and niobium industries.

The Association:

- An international, non-profit association founded in 1974 under Belgian law.
- Around 85 member companies from over 25 countries involved with all aspects of the tantalum and niobium industry supply chain (including mining, trading, processing, recycling, metal fabrication, capacitor manufacturing, medical...).
- The Association is run by its Executive Committee. This Committee reflects the range of activities of the members and covers the geographic spread of the membership, too. Presidents have been drawn from all sectors of the industry and from many parts of the world. Elections are held annually.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness and promote the remarkable properties of tantalum and niobium in all their forms.
- Disseminate information on any matter affecting that industry, excluding price and related information and any other proprietary information.
- Address major issues and challenges facing its industry such as conflict minerals legislation, artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), and the transport of naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORM).
- Organize a General Assembly of the membership in September or October each year for business and technical presentations. Typically, this includes a field trip to a member company or associated industrial facility.
- Publish a quarterly Bulletin newsletter containing interesting and informative articles about the T.I.C. and the global tantalum and niobium industries.
- Collect statistics from member companies (via an independent company to ensure confidentiality) on tantalum and niobium production, shipments and consumption. Participating members receive quarterly statistics updates.

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