



C-MINK

Critical Minerals Information
and Knowledge Hub

C-MINK Value Proposition



**UNU
INRA**

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Summary: Africa's vast critical mineral wealth has conferred an important geo-strategic advantage to the continent and given it a unique position at the heart of the global transition. Hence, Africa is at vantage point where its natural resource endowment puts it in the driving seat to leverage both its industrial and economic transformations. Nonetheless, there are serious risks that this potential will not be realized if gaps in governance and imbalances of power persist. Minerals like lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements are essential to renewable energy technologies, yet the continent has not benefitted from decades of extraction, often being locked in enclave economies where only a few people have benefitted from such wealth.

At its core, C-MINK is more than a knowledge initiative—it transforms insight into strategic foresight and lays the groundwork for strengthening Africa's leadership in the governance of its mineral wealth. In doing so, it positions the region to craft a distinctly African voice in the emerging global architecture of critical minerals.

C-MINK will serve as a self-sustaining, African-led knowledge ecosystem that empowers African countries to govern and manage their critical minerals sustainably. By directly addressing persistent information gaps and asymmetries of knowledge, the platform will support the creation of global public goods that counter prevailing trends of unsustainable and extractive resource exploitation for private gain. C-MINK will align with and amplify the efforts of regional institutions and partners working toward a just transition, ensuring that Africa leads in setting the terms of engagement in this new energy future. Using knowledge as its main vector, it will engage key stakeholders across the public, private, and academic sectors to facilitate knowledge exchange aimed at risk management and informed negotiation in the face of rapidly evolving global dynamics.



Overview

We live in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world, one that is challenging us to rethink and possibly redraw the rules of trade, investment, and power. The race towards access to critical minerals, driven by the energy transition, has exposed the vulnerabilities of old models and opened a window to new thinking. In this context, C-MINK (Critical Minerals Information and Knowledge Hub) positions itself as a response to current geopolitical shifts and rapidly changing dynamics in the critical minerals ecosystem.

This is a moment that demands more than reactive policy-making. Big decisions are being made by global power centres (China, the US, the EU), while Africa risks once again becoming the terrain upon which external interests compete. C-MINK steps in to provide African states with the intelligence, coordination, and narrative power to engage differently, not just as participants, but as rule-makers in the green economy. The Hub offers not only data and analysis, but a means to craft a new knowledge architecture, one that disrupts the extractive status quo and positions Africa to define its own terms of engagement.

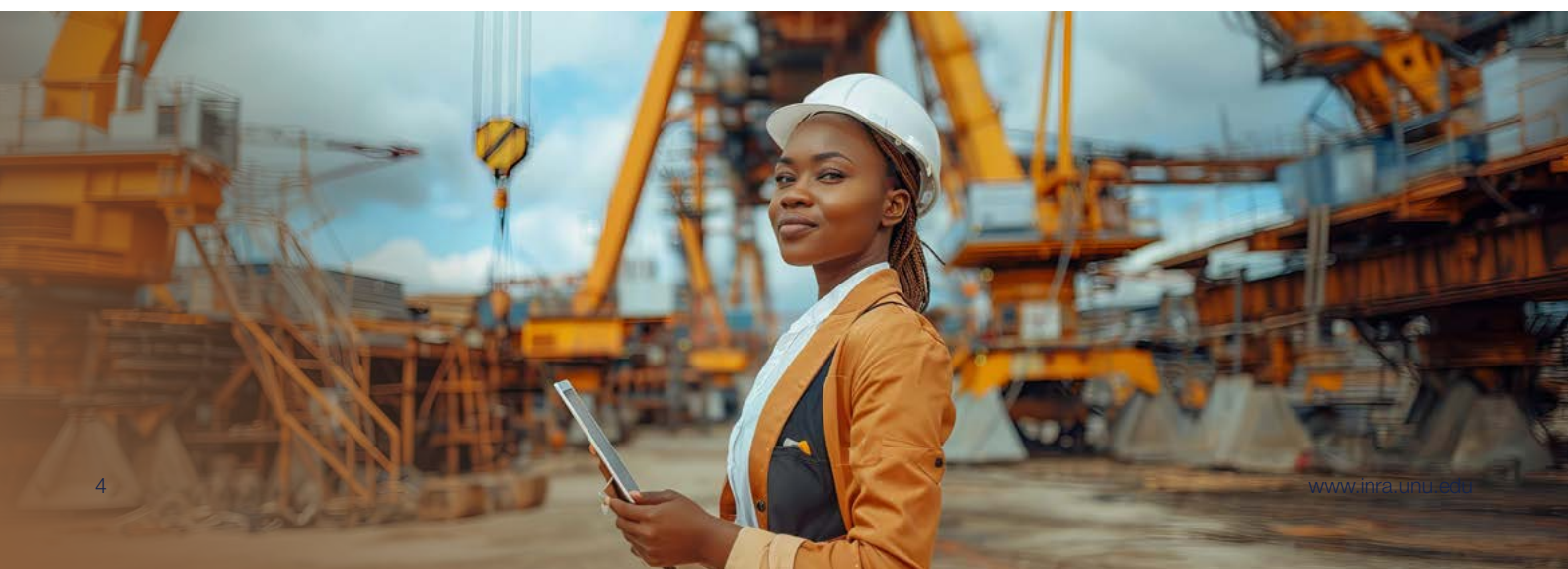
In the context of today's shifting geopolitical landscape, C-MINK (Critical Minerals Information and Knowledge Hub) positions itself as a bold effort to break the mould of extractive knowledge and passive economic engagement. From the outset, this platform seeks to establish a self-sustaining, African-led knowledge ecosystem, using knowledge not just as an instrument for analysis but as a transformative tool for dismantling outdated models of resource governance. By equipping countries with the foresight and frameworks to manage their own transitions, C-MINK supports a generational opportunity to redefine how critical minerals are leveraged for sustainable, inclusive development.

C-MINK is a demand-driven knowledge platform explicitly designed to strengthen African agency in building a new future—one in which the continent leads the charge in shaping its industrial and economic trajectory in the green transition. C-MINK empowers African governments and institutions with tailored strategic knowledge, policy support, and market intelligence to transform the continent's critical minerals sector from an extractive model into a catalyst for green industrialization, regional economic growth, and equitable global trade.

This initiative also seeks to enhance Africa's geopolitical acumen and bargaining power, creating a space for shared experiences and a stronger collective voice on the global stage. By fostering continental cooperation and strategic foresight, C-MINK supports African governments to enter new minerals markets as equal partners assertively negotiating terms, setting prices, and breaking with the legacy of passive market engagement.

C-MINK adopts a political economy-led approach to knowledge generation. Recognizing that market dynamics and multinational corporations are largely shaping the current critical minerals landscape, the knowledge generated by the platform provides African countries with the tools to advocate greater strategic autonomy over their natural resources. This reorientation enables them to break dependency cycles and formulate inclusive, sustainable pathways for managing essential minerals. Political economy insights also support the development of homegrown solutions, enabling countries to foster local industries, design clear green industrialization roadmaps, and position themselves strategically in an evolving global market.

In parallel, C-MINK recognizes that sustainable critical minerals governance must also be rooted in respect for human and environmental rights. This includes addressing the broader impacts of mining and mineral-processing on local communities, Indigenous peoples, and ecologically sensitive areas. The platform will support governments in identifying and managing these impacts, ranging from environmental degradation and water use to occupational health and displacement, while integrating considerations for artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM), environmental sustainability, and climate mitigation across supply chains. In doing so, C-MINK promotes a holistic vision of critical minerals development that is not only economically transformative but also socially just and ecologically sound.



Why C-MINK?

Africa has nearly a third of the world's critical minerals necessary for the global energy transition. However, structural constraints—information asymmetries, weak bargaining positions, inadequate governance systems, and a legacy of extractive relationships—continue to limit the continent's ability to benefit equitably from its resources. Without strategic realignment, Africa risks reinforcing historical patterns of dependency. C-MINK is not just about evidence—it is a proactive, policy-driven, market-oriented initiative that equips African decision-makers with the tools, data, and strategies they need to reshape their role in global mineral markets. It provides a responsive, demand-led knowledge service that directly supports policy and investment choices, ensuring that Africa's mineral wealth fuels its own development, not just global supply chains.

C-MINK responds to this challenge by:

- Recasting critical minerals as a strategic development lever rather than a mere export commodity.
- Serving as a responsive knowledge service, rooted in African needs, that bridges research, policy, and investment.
- Advancing African geopolitical leverage in shaping global mineral markets, with equal focus on local beneficiation and value retention.
- Enhancing political economy analysis to support autonomy, foresight, and green industrial policy design.

C-MINK's Three Core Change Pathways: mobilizing knowledge for transformative outcomes

1. Knowledge and Narrative Shift

Objective: Deliver demand-driven, contextualized knowledge to support African countries in reframing the dominant narrative and identifying most effective policy options on critical minerals—from extraction to transformation.

How:

- **Knowledge canvassing:** Convene targeted engagements with policy-makers (beginning with a workshop on 7 May 2025) to identify real-time policy challenges and knowledge gaps.
 - Output: Identification of policy challenges and knowledge gaps.
- **Knowledge production:** Commission policy-relevant research tailored to countries' evolving needs, including analysis of supply chains, pricing trends, regulatory gaps, and opportunities for value-addition.
- **Strategic foresight:** Use political-economy mapping to anticipate market dynamics and inform negotiations, leveraging local expertise and foresight tools.
 - Output: Map of market dynamics and upcoming resource access negotiations.
- **Narrative building:** Produce compelling, Africa-led stories and scenarios that challenge extractive paradigms and elevate African industrial ambitions.
 - Output: Africa-led stories and scenarios that challenge extractive paradigms.

2. Strategic Policy Support

Objective: Align national and regional policies with Africa's long-term economic and green industrialization goals.

How:

- **Policy reform support:** Building on the African mining vision and mining policies, as well as knowledge generated through C-MINK, we will offer policy support for enhanced beneficiation and value retention from critical minerals in Africa.
 - Output: Policy recommendations and reform proposals to enhance beneficiation and value retention.
- **Technical support:** Offer on-demand technical assistance and policy reviews to governments seeking to realign mining visions and strategies.
 - Output: Technical inputs and reviews to realign national mining strategies with just transition goals.
- **Policy dialogues:** Facilitate multi-stakeholder policy write-workshops (e.g., the May workshop in Ghana) to co-develop strategic roadmaps for critical mineral governance, regional coordination, and industrial development.
 - Output: Co-created strategic roadmaps and policy papers.
- **Regional integration:** Work with RECs and AU bodies to strengthen policy coherence across borders and build collective bargaining capacity.
 - Output: Joint policy frameworks and coordination mechanisms to strengthen cross-border coherence and collective bargaining power.

3. Governance and Market Structure

Objective: Address structural power imbalances in mineral markets and ensure inclusive, transparent governance of Africa's critical resources.

How:

- **Governance diagnostics:** Assess current governance frameworks to identify reform priorities and mitigate risks of elite capture, corruption, and policy contradictions.
 - Output: Diagnostic reports identifying governance gaps, reform priorities, and risks.
- **Investment strategy development:** Co-design investment strategies that prioritize local beneficiation, regional value chains, circular economy principles, and address rights-based implications of mining.
 - Output: Investment frameworks that promote local beneficiation, circularity, and uphold social and environmental safeguards.
- **Market intelligence:** Provide real-time market analytics, pricing trends, and demand forecasts to support strategic decision-making by African policy-makers and producers.
 - Output: Market briefs and forecasts to inform evidence-based decisions on pricing, demand, and strategic positioning.
- **Green industrialization:** Position critical minerals within a broader strategy for job creation, technology transfer, and sustainable industrial transformation.
 - Output: Policy recommendations and tools linking critical minerals to inclusive job creation and low-carbon industrial development.
- **Rights-based approach:** A human and environmental rights-based approach that upholds the value of communities and the environment to partake equally in and benefit from the exploitation of critical minerals.
 - Output: Guidelines and tools to integrate human and environmental rights into mining governance and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

How C-MINK Works

- **Platform structure:** C-MINK will operate as a collaborative hub anchored by UNU-INRA and facilitated by IIED's law, economics and justice programme, working with national governments, research institutions, CSOs, and regional bodies.
- **Workshops as entry points:** The May 2025 workshop in Ghana will serve as the launchpad for knowledge canvassing, stakeholder engagement, and policy challenge mapping. Following this, a larger continental-wide workshop will be held, bringing in key stakeholders across the critical minerals policy space and value chain.
- **Service model:** C-MINK will deliver a combination of:
 - On-demand knowledge services.
 - Regular analytical products (e.g., policy briefs, market outlooks).
 - Technical support for strategic policy design and implementation.
 - Advocacy and narrative-shaping outputs.
 - A data platform sharing cases of best practice, country policies, and market and price statistics.
 - Capacity-building within the critical minerals space, for national governments, research institutions, CSOs, and regional bodies.



Enhancing African Agency

To position Africa as a unified and strategic force in global critical minerals governance, C-MINK also builds on the extensive work of existing regional and continental institutions, such as the African Union, RECs, Afreximbank, the African Development Bank, and other policy and research bodies. Rather than reinventing the wheel, it seeks to connect, amplify, and coordinate these existing efforts. This interlinking strengthens the continent's geopolitical coherence and provides a platform for shared learning, joint advocacy, and aligned implementation, thereby turning Africa's collective voice into a formidable force on the global stage.

C-MINK is more than a platform—it is a political economy-informed tool for restoring African agency, enabling innovation, and shifting global power relations in favour of African interests. By leveraging collective expertise, geopolitical awareness, and real-time engagement with African policy-makers, C-MINK aims to catalyse a new era of just, sustainable, and transformative resource governance across the continent. Its core mission is to move beyond conceptual debates, enabling tangible policy reform, market realignment, and strategic foresight to ensure Africa is not just a participant, but a leader in shaping the green minerals economy.



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