



Critical Minerals Information and Knowledge Hub (C-MINK)



C-MINK Background

The Critical Minerals Information and Knowledge Hub (C-MINK) is a demand-driven African initiative designed to provide governments, regional institutions, and stakeholders with the knowledge, policy support, and market intelligence required to strategically govern critical minerals. Africa's critical mineral wealth offers an opportunity to power industrialization, create jobs, and place the continent at the heart of the global green transition. This vast resource endowment has conferred an important geo-strategic advantage to the continent, yet it has not benefitted from decades of extraction, often being locked in enclave economies where only a few people have gained from such wealth.

C-MINK's value lies in reframing extractive narratives to build African agency, sovereignty, and innovation. The platform is envisioned as a strategic knowledge and convening hub, producing forward-looking policy direction, market intelligence, and analytical products to support Africa's transformation from a raw material exports model to an industrialised economic bloc with equitable participation in global value chains. At its core, C-MINK seeks to transform knowledge into strategic foresight, laying the groundwork for strengthening Africa's leadership in the governance of its mineral wealth.

Studies, such as those by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (2018), demonstrate that geological data gathered to assess mineral resources could yield substantial development co-benefits, including identifying energy sources, water resources, geohazards, and geotechnical factors. However, most Geological Survey Organizations (GSOs) on the continent lack the funding and better resources to conduct large-scale surveys or effectively disseminate data. These gaps highlight the broader asymmetries of information and knowledge that continue to undermine Africa's ability to fully benefit from its resources. C-MINK responds by addressing these gaps and equipping African governments with the tools to anticipate market dynamics, reframe extractive narratives, and negotiate from a position of strength in the minerals economy. Knowledge is a critical part of this shift and can serve as a catalyst for transformational change, enhancing Africa's strategic position in global supply chains.

C-MINK draws on UNU-INRA's knowledge-brokering, ECA's policy expertise, and the AUC's political leadership to shift Africa from fragmented responses to strategic action.

The initiative will also set the stage for long-term collaboration on the sustainable development of Africa's critical minerals and, in particular, consolidate efforts with the AUC, ECA, AfDB and the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC) to ensure alignment with Africa's broader development vision. With their collective convening power and political authority, the AUC, ECA and AfDB can embed C-MINK firmly within Africa's institutional framework, ensuring that its outputs advance Africa's priorities and **strengthen the continent's capacity to negotiate with greater effectiveness and authority on the global stage.**

At the same time, C-MINK will leverage partnerships with academic institutions, knowledge brokers, civil society organizations and other actors to maximise synergies and avoid fragmentation or duplication of efforts. While C-MINK's primary focus is on policy constituencies, it will also engage other key stakeholders, notably civil society, private sector, and social groups not least the youth and women. To this end, C-MINK will:

- Partner with African CSOs to anchor C-MINK in community priorities and ensure critical mineral governance delivers social and environmental justice
- Engage private and business actors through C-MINK to channel investments into local value chains and green industrialization across Africa.
- Through C-MINK, mobilising youth and women's groups to shape decision-making on critical minerals and secure fair access to emerging opportunities.

Demand Trends & Projections

Global demand for critical minerals is soaring, driven by electric vehicles, renewable energy, and global decarbonization policies. Africa, with 30% of the world's proven green/critical reserves, is well-positioned to capture this growth.

- ▶ **Global demand for lithium is projected to increase tenfold by 2050.**
- ▶ **Cobalt demand is expected to triple by 2050, while nickel is forecast to double.**
- ▶ **Rare earths and graphite demand could rise more than fourfold by 2040 in net-zero scenarios.**

This window of opportunity underscores the urgency for Africa to act collectively and strategically.

Knowledge as a Pillar

Knowledge and knowledge sharing are recognised as pillars in both the African Union's African Minerals Vision (AMV) and Africa Green Minerals Strategy (AGMS). C-MINK will anchor this principle by creating a trusted space for regional bodies, governments, and partners to exchange lessons, build capacity, and co-create solutions informed by Africa-owned data and expertise.

To ensure complementarity, C-MINK will work in partnership with the African Green Minerals Observatory (AGMO), a joint initiative of the AU and SAIIA that provides comprehensive country and mineral profiles, policies, and data. AGMO serves as a technical resource, while C-MINK will translate such data into foresight, policy options, and narratives—ensuring both initiatives reinforce one another and advance continental strategies.

C-MINK will also work in close partnership with the African Development Bank's African Natural Resources Management and Investment Centre (ANRC), which provides knowledge to guide government policy and investment decisions. With a strategy focused on governance, valuing natural capital, and investment facilitation, ANRC's work on value chains, feasibility studies, and regional collaboration complements C-MINK's foresight role, ensuring African governments capture greater value from critical minerals.

C-MINK will also partner with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), particularly through its Climate Change, Food Security and Natural Resource Division (CFND) and the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC). ECA's work on research, policy advice, and regional dialogues—spanning climate change, natural resource management, and the Africa Mining Vision—complements C-MINK's focus on critical minerals by strengthening the evidence base for policy reform, supporting inclusive governance, and amplifying Africa's voice in global forum.

The knowledge hub aims to strengthen African agency in the governance of critical minerals, ensuring they become catalysts for green industrialization, inclusive development, and just transitions. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Deliver demand-driven, contextualised knowledge to reframe dominant narratives and identify the most effective policy options.
- Align national and regional policies with Africa's long-term economic and industrialisation goals.

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



Core Functions:

1. Knowledge and Narrative Shift

C-MINK and its partners will generate and broker Africa-owned knowledge, provide policymakers with the evidence and foresight needed, and address gaps to shift narratives from extraction to transformation, enabling African leadership in critical minerals governance.

- **Data Repository & Mapping:** Centralised access to geological, contract, and market data, in partnership with the African Green Minerals Observatory (AGMO).
- **Policy-Relevant Research:** Commission studies on supply chains, pricing trends, and regulatory gaps.
- **Political-Economy Mapping:** Use political-economy analysis to anticipate market dynamics and inform negotiations.
- **Cross-Fertilisation Platform:** Create a trusted space for regional bodies, institutions, and partners to exchange lessons and align initiatives.
- **Narrative Building:** Produce African-led scenarios and stories that challenge extractive paradigms and elevate African ambitions.

2. Strategic Policy Support

C-MINK and its partners will provide responsive policy advice, technical assistance, and capacity-building to help African governments and RECs design strategies that maximise beneficiation, value retention, and collective bargaining power.

- **Policy Reform Support:** Develop recommendations and policy reform proposals to enhance beneficiation and value addition.
- **Technical Assistance:** Provide on-demand reviews and inputs to align mining visions with just transition goals.
- **Policy Dialogues:** Facilitate multi-stakeholder workshops and write-shops to co-develop strategic roadmaps.
- **Capacity Building:** Train policymakers, researchers, and civil society on minerals governance and industrialisation pathways.
- **Collective Bargaining Capacity:** Strengthen cross-border coherence by working with RECs and AU bodies to build Africa's collective voice in global negotiations.



3. Governance Structure and Market Intelligence

C-MINK and its partners will address power asymmetries in minerals markets by strengthening transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making.

- **Governance Diagnostics:** Identify policy reform priorities and potential risks, such as elite capture or corruption.
- **Market Intelligence:** Provide real-time analytics, pricing trends, and demand forecasts to inform decisions.
- **Investment Strategy:** Co-design strategies for local beneficiation, regional value chain development, and circular economy principles.
- **Transparency & Accountability:** Promote open data and develop rights-based governance tools, embedding social and environmental safeguards and benefit-sharing mechanisms into mineral governance.

Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened data sovereignty, African agency, and regional ownership.
- Improved policy coherence across countries and institutions, enhancing bargaining power on the global stage.
- Enhanced cross-learning among regions and institutions through shared platforms.
- Contextualised and timely knowledge to support foresight, informed negotiation, and strategic positioning.
- Better investment decisions and frameworks that link critical minerals to local value addition, inclusive job creation, technology transfer, and low-carbon industrial development.
- Rights-based governance tools that integrate human and environmental safeguards.

Empowered institutions and communities through open access to knowledge and transparent decision-making.

Conclusion

C-MINK is more than a platform—it is a **political economy-informed tool to exercise African agency, enabling innovation, and shifting global power relations in favour of African interests.** By leveraging knowledge as a transformative tool, C-MINK aims to catalyse a new era of just, sustainable, and strategic resource governance across the continent.