

Promoting Responsible Mining through Participation in Robust Independent Assurance

Statement shared on behalf of the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) Buyers Group, consisting of the IRMA Purchasing Sector members and Processors Working Group participants.¹

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It is imperative for brands that their customers have confidence in their products – not only in their quality and performance, but also in the sourcing practices behind the raw materials in those products. Regardless of whether brands directly or indirectly source those materials, it is important to recognize the significant impacts, both positive and negative, that mining can have on communities and ecosystems.

Recognizing these impacts, downstream companies that are members of the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) “Buyers Group” seek to ensure that mine sites uphold best practices, with IRMA’s Standard for Responsible Mining recognized as the most robust and credible representation of those expectations.²

The first step on the road towards operational excellence sought by members of the Buyers Group is an IRMA audit.

While each brand and supply chain actor formulates their own procurement policies and expectations, the IRMA Buyers Group – consisting of dozens of brands representing over US\$2 trillion of annual revenues across the automotive, consumer electronics, energy, jewelry, and minerals processing sectors – seeks to emphasize a general view that a third-party assessment in IRMA’s system is a valuable step for any mine site, regardless of the resulting achievement level. This is due to the level of stakeholder engagement, systems and document review during the audit and the resulting report, providing a level of detail and unprecedented transparency into this key point in the supply chain.

For mines entering the IRMA process for the first time, members of the Buyers Group recognize an IRMA third-party independent audit as a commitment to transparency and engagement, and that regardless of any specific achievement level the mine might reach in its first audit, the audit report represents a transparent opportunity for engagement, dialogue, and continuous improvement.

IRMA's core principle of continuous improvement emphasizes the pathway to operational excellence through iterative advancement rather than a pass-fail framework. This approach recognizes the challenges and imperfect nature of global supply chains. Though members of the Buyers Group express a preference for participation above any specific achievement level resulting from a first audit, the expectation for continuous improvement over time remains unwavering.

This is because IRMA is more than an audit framework: Members of the Buyers Group believe that IRMA assurance should be understood as a roadmap for operational excellence, a platform for positive stakeholder engagement, and a pathway to generate trust through transparency that ultimately reduces longer-term negative impacts and supply chain risks.

Herein lies the value of IRMA for purchasers who seek an instrument for interaction with the supply chain and why the Buyers Group commends mines for engaging in IRMA too.

The members of the IRMA Buyers Group are each separate companies, with no power or authority to enter into or undertake any obligation on behalf of another member, and no member of the Buyers Group incurs any obligation to purchase any products or services by reason of this statement.

¹ The full list of members and participants can be found at <https://responsiblemining.net/members-partners/#irma-member-list>

² Independent reports such as *An Assessment of Third-Party Assurance and Accreditation Schemes in the Minerals, Steel and Aluminum Sectors* by Lead the Charge provide a benchmarking of IRMA and other relevant standards and initiatives against stakeholder expectations: <https://leadthecharge.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/LeadTheCharge-Assessment-06022024.pdf>