

Press Release

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Swiss Better Gold – supporting responsible artisanal and small-scale gold mining

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Swiss Better Gold Association launch the third phase of the Swiss Better Gold Initiative, a public-private partnership promoting responsibly extracted gold from artisanal and small-scale mines.

Anchored on solid results achieved over the first two phases, this new phase will aim to continue to scale up the initiative's positive impacts on the ground as well as a gradual process of handing-over the responsibility to uphold achieved outcomes from the public to the private partner represented by the Swiss Better Gold Association.

The Swiss Better Gold Initiative was launched in 2013 with the aim of improving social and environmental conditions in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia. This new phase of the programme will be deployed from 2021 to 2025 and, in line with the aspiration to attain a higher development impact, will aim to reach out to other jurisdictions through complementary activities. Further, it will also increase focus on transversal topics such as climate change, gender equality, and enhance knowledge dissemination on responsible ASGM mining.

Setting the scene for this continued public-private partnership, the State Secretary Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, SECO Director and Director of the Foreign Economic Affairs Directorate, and Mr Olivier Demierre, the President of the Swiss Better Gold Association and Senior Vice President CSR at MKS PAMP, presented the third phase of this meaningful collaboration. Ambassador Dominique Paravicini, Head of SECO's Economic Cooperation and Development Division, Ambassador Ana Rosa Valdivieso Santa María of Peru, as well as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Colombia to the WTO at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Santiago Wills, have expressed the importance of the programme.

"Switzerland is a major actor in gold worldwide, importing and exporting vast amounts of the metal every year. The reasons for Switzerland's major role in global commodity trading can be traced to the country's long tradition and to the favourable economic conditions it offers to businesses across all sectors. The Swiss Better Gold Initiative is one such measure. It is unique because it is neither a pure development project, nor a pure market approach project. It allows the creation of sustainable value chains from mine to market with a special focus on artisanal and small-scale mining," notes Mrs Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch.

"The gold industry recognises supporting artisanal and small-scale gold mining as critical to responsible sourcing. To date, the Swiss Better Gold Association, with the support of the Swiss government and the Swiss gold industry, have been able to export more than 8,000 kg of responsibly produced Swiss Better Gold and generate over USD 5.6 million of impact premium for the benefit of participating ASGM producers. The Swiss Better Gold Association is delighted about the fast and positive growth of the initiative and looks very much forward to further expand its reach and support to ASGM producers' continuous improvements," adds Olivier Demierre.

Notes for editors:

About the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

The Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs [SECO]) and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC] and the Peace and Human Rights Division [PHRD]) implement Switzerland's international cooperation. SECO is in charge of economic cooperation.

The commodities sector – in particular commodities trading – remains a significant segment of the Swiss economy. Switzerland is committed to achieving a level playing field internationally and will continue to promote responsible practices, and to maintain dialogue between the various stakeholders. Hence, the Federal Council has produced several reports on Commodities entailing a number of recommendations in the areas of competitiveness, innovative strength, integrity, sustainability of industry practices, and dialogue with stakeholders. Through SECO's Economic Cooperation, the Federal Council supports various tools and initiatives, one of which is the Swiss Better Gold Initiative.

Arising from a wish to improve the situation of artisanal and small-scale gold miners, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Swiss Better Gold Association have developed a public-private partnership named the Swiss Better Gold Initiative for Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM). Set up in 2013, the Swiss Better Gold Initiative became a pioneer solution with the purpose of generating transparency and responsibility in the ASGM sector.

About Swiss Better Gold

The Swiss Better Gold Association is a non-for-profit association of Swiss businesses active in the gold sector including refiners, jewellers, watchmakers and financial institutions. It aims to improve mining practices in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) as well as working and living conditions of the involved communities and facilitate the entry of responsible ASGM gold into the market.

The Swiss Better Gold Association partners with the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Swiss Better Gold Initiative, the on-the-ground implementation team that supports ASGMs.

The Swiss Better Gold Initiative was set up in 2013 with the aim of improving the environmental and social situation of artisanal and small-scale miners through direct technical support to ASGM in implementing responsible mining practices. The initiative is the result of a public-private partnership between the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Swiss Better Gold Association. The initiative first implemented in Peru and has since then extended to Colombia and Bolivia.

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