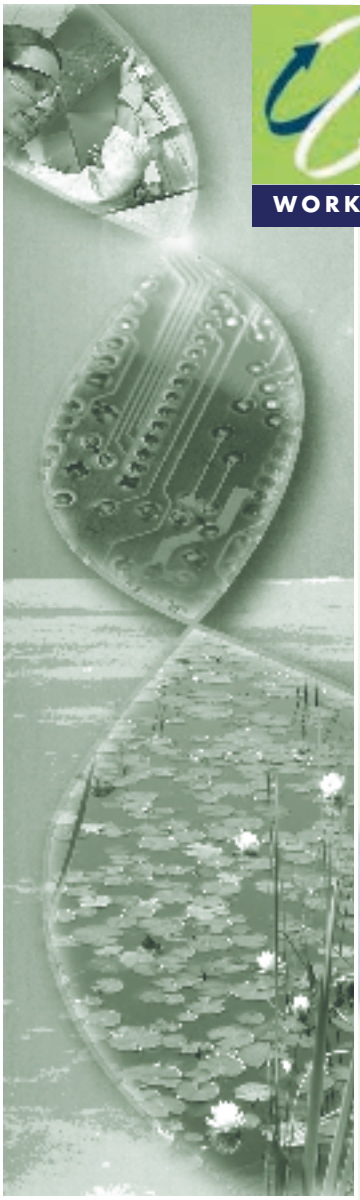
The Non-Ferrous Metals Consultative Forum on Sustainable Development

WORKING GROUP ON SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT



What is the Working Group's Remit?

In April 2001, the Science and Research Working Group of the Non-Ferrous Metals Consultative Forum on Sustainable Development (NFMSD) held its inaugural meeting and defined its work priorities:

- *Developing a Net-Based Science Network – to include contact details and affiliations of scientists known to be working in the field of science and the sustainable development of non-ferrous metals.*
- *Principles for the Life-Cycle Assessment of Non-Ferrous Metals – with focus on materials flow guidelines, harmonisation of methodology and data issues in relation to sustainable development.*
- *Stock-Take of Metals/Science-Related Sustainable Development Initiatives – with identification of the scientific programs content in any other sustainable development initiatives that are currently under way.*
- *Guiding Principles for Risk Assessment – include a stock take of work already done, and then elaboration of guiding principles for improving risk assessment. The Group has addressed what constitutes an acceptable level of risk, how risk assessment may contribute rationality in decision making and how to improve data as well as communication and educational issues in relation to risk assessment.*

www.nfmsd.org

Who is in the Working Group?

The strength of the Forum process has been its multi-stakeholder approach and the Science Working Group has reflected this philosophy:

- *The Working Group has three co-chairs: one drawn from the Study Groups' member governments, one from the international non-ferrous metals industry, and one from a public interest group.*
- *Twenty-eight members of the Group have participated in its meetings from fifteen different countries.*
- *About half the Group's members are drawn from the international non-ferrous metals industry and half come equally from Study Groups' member governments, academia and non-governmental organisations.*

The International Lead and Zinc Study Group's Secretariat has provided support for the Science Working Group.

Contact Information:

International Copper Study Group
www.icsg.org

International Nickel Study Group
www.insg.org

International Lead and Zinc Study Group
www.ilzsg.org

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What has been achieved?

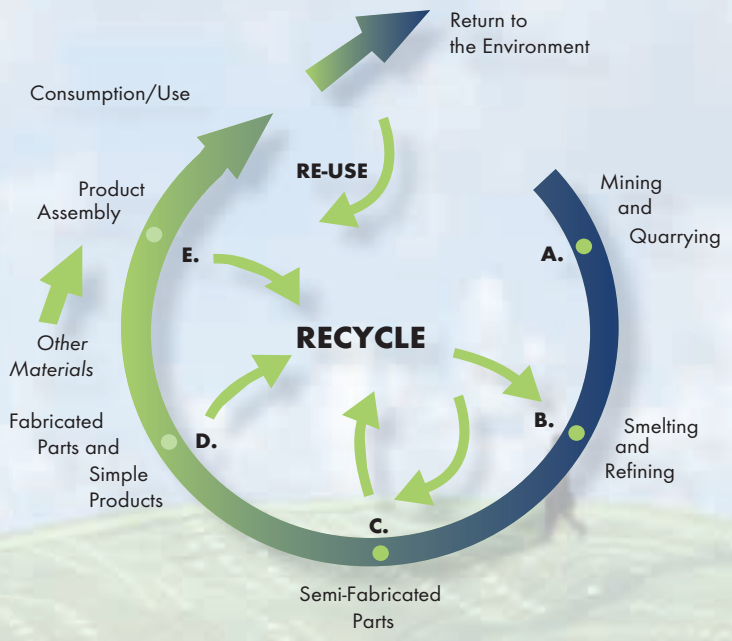
Since April 2001 the Science Working Group has made substantial progress on a number of fronts. The Group has:

- *launched its Science Network successfully in the first half of 2002 on the Forum's web site at www.nfmsd.org. Since its inception the Network has had a high number of visitors confirming its status as a valued information source;*
- *developed an approach towards principles of risk assessment and how these relate to formulating policy responses towards risk assessment for non-ferrous metals;*
- *highlighted issues that relate specifically to Life-Cycle Assessment for non-ferrous metals and has ensured that linkages have been made to parallel initiatives on LCA under way in UNEP and the Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC).*

The Group has provided for the expression of a range of stakeholder views regarding the science of non-ferrous metals and sustainable development. For instance, the Group accepted that the risk assessment processes followed in many jurisdictions meant that local community groups and public interest groups often felt that the burden of proof lay with them to establish that existing environmental protection legislation is sufficient.

This diverse approach has added value to the Science Working Group by exposing stakeholders to a range of views and by presenting them in a neutral and accessible manner. For some participants, this was the first time that they had heard the other side of the debate expressed in clear and unambiguous terms. This stakeholder engagement underlying the Group may produce a framework for agreeing on how to address areas of contention.

Minerals and Metals Life Cycle



Source: *Natural Resources Canada.*

Next Steps for the Working Group

The Group's work on risk assessment has shown that regulatory systems are moving away from end-of-pipe solutions and towards the use of policy tools that recognise that environmental harm may occur through production, use, disposal and recycling of non-ferrous metals. The product stewardship approach in understanding production, use, disposal and recycling of products associated with a particular non-ferrous metal is critical in conducting a comprehensive risk assessment and it is key to understanding how risk assessment of non-ferrous metals falls within the context of sustainable development.

It is envisaged that the Working Group will elaborate on the parameters defining sustainability linkages to product stewardship in greater depth. Examples may include topics such as:

- *Formulating a mechanism to make governments, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders more aware of the specific requirements for risk assessment of non-ferrous metals and facilitate a continued dialogue amongst stakeholders*
- *Organising a Workshop and/or Working Group of stakeholders to assess the current state of knowledge in the science of bio-availability of metals and its incorporation in risk assessment*
- *Organising a Workshop and/or Working Group to address the issue of risk assessment methodology and models for non-ferrous metals and the related policy considerations*
- *Further work to elaborate on how knowledge gained in advancing science for risk assessment can be used in improving life-cycle assessment approaches for non-ferrous metals*