

opportunity for diversification. The only uranium company on Zambia's cadaster is GoviEx Uranium, developing the Muntanga project, with a recently acquired new license (Lundazi).

A 750,000 km2 country-wide airborne survey, contracted by the government with Xcalibur Smart Mapping, could also open the ground for other resources, and help the country move beyond copper, which was the theme of its first Insaka mining event.

**Spotlight on the DRC: The siren's call of the eastern Congo**

DRC's staggering mineral wealth and extraordinary discoveries make the it an irresistible mining frontier, despite numerous challenges. Nevermind that the DRC is one of the most corrupt countries in the world (ranking 162 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Index), one of the worst places for ease of doing business (ranking 183 out of 190 countries according to the World Bank), or a hotbed for legal troubles, the latest scandal being Australian company AVZ halting trading this year after authorities withdrew its permit over conflicts between shareholders, including Chinese company Zijin Mining and local state-owned Cominiere. Nothing seems to deter investors.

The eastern part of the country, particularly the Kivu provinces, has been insecure for many years, leaving the area mostly in the hands of artisanal miners and militias. Recently, however, more players are moving into this part of the country. The major player in the east is Barrick Gold, operating Africa's largest gold mine. Kibali is in the Haut-Uélé province in northeastern DRC. This year, Barrick announced new discoveries at the AKT target, located 4 km away from Kibali's processing plant. Barrick's top executive Mark Bristow said the new target could deliver a multi-million-ounce orebody feeding into the continent's largest bullion operation.

While Haut-Uélé serves as a refugee sanctuary for those fleeing the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, other companies are daring to venture closer to the epicenter of the war, moving into these red-marked regions. The UAE signed a US\$1.9 billion deal with state-owned Société Aurifère du Kivu et du Maniema (Sakima) to develop at least four mines in eastern DRC, a region marked by intense violence, with over 120 active militia groups according to the United Nations.

Besides this direct state-to-state deal, private companies are forging partnerships with local artisanal and small-scale miners. According to the Delve Database, launched by the World Bank, up to 2 million people are directly dependent the artisanal and small-scale (ASM) mining in the country, and up to 10 million derive their livelihood from ASM. Half a million of these are in the troubled eastern DRC.

Vancouver-based Canada Rare Earth Corp announced this year the establishment of a rare earth supply operation in the DRC through its local subsidiary, Simba Essential Minerals. The minerals would be sourced from the Kivu provinces (North and South) through local mining cooperatives. The TSXV player is to invest in processing technology and equipment to increase efficiencies.



*“Countless small communities across the globe sit atop untapped wealth, waiting for the right partner to unlock their generational prosperity. Our goal is to partner with cooperatives and local communities to scale the extraction of gold in a lawful, formalized way.”*

Jason Clarke, CEO, **Society Artisanal**

In the artisanal gold space, American company Society Artisanal was founded four years ago and has since worked on establishing a semi-industrial alluvial gold mining operation through a cooperative in South Kivu. The company was established by former NGO worker Jason Clarke, now Society Artisanal's CEO, who met former child soldier turned refugee, Evariste Emmanuel (Eva), a Congolese from South Kivu. Eva's family, whom he later reconnected with, was part of one of the largest gold cooperatives in the DRC. The two partners started looking for business opportunities that would also benefit the local community: "The Western perception of small-scale and artisanal mining from places like the Congo is associated with conflict minerals, 'blood diamonds' and other negative tropes, but at the bottom of it, there are millions of hard-working artisanal miners who are simply trying to make a living. While multiple NGOs and government agencies are engaging with artisanal mining communities to provide training, capacity building and certifications, we found a gap in actual sustainable businesses to enrich the livelihoods of the locals," said Clarke.

Operating under a 'Blue Status', Society Artisanal helps formalize the cooperative by ensuring conformity to local regulations (including the removal of mercury), bringing in equipment, and introducing new technologies like drones and surveys to better understand the presence of gold deposits. With equipment on its way, Society Artisanal wants to start building the South Kivu site in 2025, projecting to produce between 10 to 20 kg/month from the site. The investment for this program will range between US\$3 and US\$5 million. The company established a non-intervention agreement with the Mai Mai (community-based militia) groups present in the region. Clarke hopes to see the model replicated in other parts of the world, having already registered the company in Liberia and looking at the acquisition of a large site in Guinea. "For now, the focus is to prove it can be done in the DRC - if it can be done here, it can be done anywhere," said Clarke. ■

East Africa

# Spotlight on Tanzania

*"Mama Samia" talks mining*

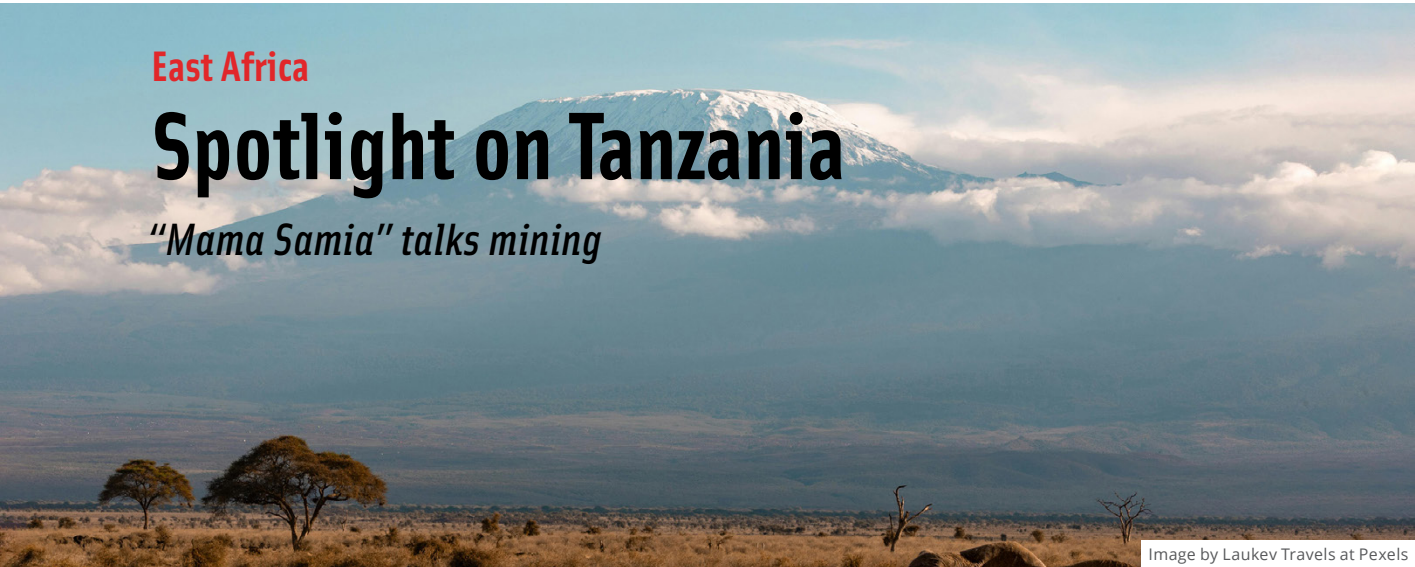


Image by Laukev Travels at Pexels

Everybody has something nice to say about Tanzania's president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, affectionately called Mama Samia, 'mama' being a cultural honorific address for women in leadership positions. Hassan took power after the unexpected death of former president John Magufuli in 2021, just a year into his second term. Though

Hassan was Magufuli's vice president, her governance has taken a completely different direction from that of her predecessor, who is remembered as 'the bulldozer' because of his forceful leadership style: The former President was a hard-liner on the industry, while his successor has taken a much softer approach.

This approach is working so far. The mining sector accounts for close to 10% of GDP, a contribution it has not reached in over a decade. Interestingly, a perception of underwhelming benefits from the mining industry was a particularly sore spot for Mr. Magufuli. Under his leadership, Tanzania banned the exports of unprocessed min-



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