

ECOFIN AGENCY · ZAMBIA

World Bank backs mineral processing compacts in Zambia, Mauritania

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The World Bank, under President Ajay Banga, is partnering with African mining nations to build domestic mineral processing industries, with Zambia, Mauritania, and Malawi identified as the first three countries to pursue structured government agreements known as Compacts. The initiative marks a deliberate shift away from raw commodity exports toward value-added manufacturing on the continent.

Zambia's Compact targets the production of copper cables — moving the country up the value chain from raw copper extraction toward finished electrical products. Mauritania is pursuing higher-value iron products, seeking to convert its iron ore base into processed outputs that command stronger international pricing. Malawi's industrial goals are also part of the programme, though the specific focus differs from its copper- and iron-oriented neighbours. Each Compact is structured as a government partnership, with the World Bank providing the institutional and likely financial architecture to support the transition.

The strategic logic is consistent with a broader trend among African resource-holding states pushing back against decades of unprocessed mineral exports. For Zambia specifically, copper cable manufacturing would require significant industrial infrastructure — smelting, wire-drawing facilities, and reliable power — areas where capital investment and technical expertise remain significant constraints. The World Bank's involvement is intended to help governments unlock that investment, though the Compacts as described remain frameworks rather than funded construction programmes at this stage.

For the Norwegian oil and gas service sector, the direct near-term connection is limited — these are mining and metals initiatives rather than hydrocarbon projects. However, the broader signal matters: the World Bank's active engagement in African industrial policy, structured through sovereign Compacts, indicates a growing multilateral appetite for large-scale infrastructure investment across the continent. Zambia's copper processing ambitions, in particular, will require substantial power infrastructure, and energy supply to industrial facilities — whether grid-scale or captive gas or LNG-based — could eventually create procurement opportunities adjacent to this programme. Norwegian companies with experience in remote industrial power supply or infrastructure project development should monitor how these Compacts evolve from policy commitments into bankable projects.

Mauritania is also worth watching independently of its iron ore ambitions. The country sits within an active offshore hydrocarbon province — the Greater Tortue Ahmeyim LNG project is a live development in Mauritanian waters — and any acceleration of World Bank engagement in Mauritania's industrial base could provide a supportive investment climate for energy infrastructure more broadly. The Compacts themselves are pre-contract instruments: government frameworks signalling intent rather than signed construction or service agreements. Norwegian service companies should treat this as an early-stage monitoring item and focus relationship-building efforts on Zambian and Mauritanian government counterparts and the World Bank's regional infrastructure teams.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

These Compacts are policy frameworks, not funded contracts, so procurement outreach is premature. Norwegian companies should monitor how Zambia's copper processing and Mauritania's iron value-chain ambitions translate into specific infrastructure tenders — particularly power supply, utilities, and logistics — where Norwegian industrial project expertise may be relevant. Relationship-building with World Bank regional teams and the respective mining ministries is the appropriate near-term action.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Pipeline/Infrastructure:** Zambia's copper cable manufacturing will require reliable industrial power and gas or LNG supply infrastructure — monitor for captive energy tenders as Compacts mature into funded projects.
- **LNG:** Mauritania's expanding World Bank relationship sits alongside the live Greater Tortue Ahmeyim LNG development; increased multilateral engagement may accelerate broader energy infrastructure investment in-country.
- **Service:** Norwegian project development and feasibility consultancies can position early with World Bank regional teams shaping the technical and infrastructure requirements underpinning each Compact.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** No direct subsea angle from this article, but Mauritania's offshore hydrocarbon activity warrants continued monitoring as World Bank investment climate support could de-risk future field development decisions.

[Original source: Ecofin Agency →](#)

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