



Press release

Non-regulated information

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Umicore and STL sign partnership related to germanium recycling from Big Hill's mining waste materials in DRC

Umicore and STL¹, Gécamines's subsidiary, have signed an exclusive, long-term partnership agreement whereby Umicore will support STL to valorize Germanium from the Big Hill² tailings site in Lubumbashi, DRC. Umicore will optimize STL's new processing facility at the site, using its refining and recycling expertise and in return will get exclusive access to the processed Germanium in order to produce material solutions for high-tech applications.

For many years now, STL has been mining Big Hill's 14 million tons of metals-containing slags³ -- accumulated from a century of mining activity -- for Zinc, Silver, Cobalt, Copper and Germanium and selling these metals on the market. STL's Germanium previously entered the market through third-party refiners outside of DRC. STL is now seeking to further increase the value generated from DRC's mining materials itself and inside the country by optimizing the valorization of Big Hill's Germanium concentrates with the new hydro-metallurgical facility it commissioned in 2023. In this it will be supported by Umicore as its technology partner.

The first test volumes of Germanium concentrates are expected to be refined by Umicore in the last quarter of 2024, with a subsequent ramp-up of STL's Germanium extraction capacities.

For Umicore the agreement will diversify its Germanium supply sources with a guaranteed, multi-annual offtake of substantial volumes. Umicore's [Electro-Optic Materials \(EOM\) Business Unit](#) uses and recycles Germanium to create material solutions for optical and electronic applications. These include fiber optics, solar cells and electronics.

STL will benefit from Umicore's expertise in non-ferrous metals refining and recycling to optimize the flowsheet of its new facility and ramp up capacity and ensure consistent Germanium outputs while adhering to the strictest ESG standards. In addition to the operational and technical support, Umicore will help in skill development to analyze the Germanium content in the tailings for recycling and support STL's ambitions to further develop downstream Germanium products.

For Gécamines, the parent company of STL, this agreement constitutes an extremely important step in its new strategy.

¹ [Société pour le Traitement du Terril de Lubumbashi](#)/ Terril Treatment Company of Lubumbashi a 100% subsidiary of Gécamines, Private company owned by the DRC State

² Big Hill is a tailings site from historical mining residues in Lubumbashi, DRC's second largest town and located in the Katanga province which is rich in mining.

³ Slag is waste matter separated from metals during mining activities



This long-term commitment embodies one of the aspects of its new positioning aimed at building a high added value mining industry in the Democratic Republic of Congo. From a relationship as a supplier of raw materials, STL – with the assistance of Umicore – has opted to integrate the value chain of refining critical metals.

Gécamines has therefore chosen to position STL as its subsidiary dedicated to the local processing of strategic minerals. Beyond Germanium, STL will invest in the production of gallium, cobalt, zinc present in the Lubumbashi Wasteland, but also in the future in Lithium, Tin, cadmium or coltan. on which Gécamines will reposition itself as the mining industrial arm of the State committed to the fight against illegal industrial exploitation in the DRC.

As a producer of raw metals, Gécamines has chosen to capitalize on the unique situation of the DRC on the chessboard of strategic raw materials and the production of value-added metals, truly creating jobs and wealth for the Congolese Nation. This partnership constitutes an additional step in this strategy, after the inauguration in STL on October 4, 2023 of its hydrometallurgical plant by His Excellency the President of the Republic, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo.



“Umicore’s agreement with STL fits perfectly with our circular business model and gives value to historical waste in the broadest sense. Optimizing the recycling of Germanium diversifies and secures supplies of this critical metal in a resilient supply chain. It will also contribute to developing the local economy and new skills,” said Mathias Miedreich, CEO of Umicore. *“We are proud to contribute our proven and long-standing refining and recycling experience to this flagship project.”*

Guy Robert Lukama, Chairman GECAMINES SA/STL said: *“Gécamines’ priority through this partnership between STL, its subsidiary, and Umicore is to realize its new vision and ambition to become a major player in the field of processing strategic minerals. We must seek value wherever it is by capitalizing on the uniqueness of our natural resources and the dynamic of the industrial revolution of energy transition of which we must be a key component. We believe that this strategic agreement will create jobs as well as new opportunities for small businesses and have a tangible impact in the local communities in which we operate. We are confident we will achieve those goals with the support of Umicore.”*

Grant Dempsey, General Manager, STL said: *“Our Germanium recycling partnership between STL and Umicore will significantly benefit the local economy, the broader industry, and the environment. The collaboration will create new employment opportunities and enhance workers’ skills and regional economic growth. Additionally, this partnership will improve environmental conditions by optimizing resource utilization and supporting emission reductions across various industries. It will bring new capabilities that will help us enhance the output of our existing operations and establish a dependable source of Germanium that can be utilized for numerous applications.”*



About Umicore

Umicore is a *circular* materials technology company that focuses on application areas where its expertise in materials science, chemistry and metallurgy makes a real difference. Its activities are organized into four Business Groups: Battery Materials, Catalysis, Recycling and Specialty Materials. Each Business Group is divided into market-focused business units offering materials and solutions at the cutting edge of new technological developments and essential to everyday life.

Umicore generates most of its revenues from and dedicates most of its R&D efforts to clean mobility materials and recycling. Umicore's overriding goal of sustainable value creation is based on an ambition to develop, produce and recycle materials in a way that fulfills its mission: Materials for a better life.

Umicore's industrial and commercial operations as well as its R&D activities are spread across the world to best serve its international customer base with more than 11,500 employees. The Group generated revenues (excluding metal) of € 3.9 billion (turnover of € 18.3 billion) in 2023.

About Gecamines:

GECAMINES SA, is a commercial company whose main activity is mining and whose sole shareholder is the Congolese State.

Its current production of metals includes copper and cobalt. The Company's mining potential also includes tin and its companions.

The Company also has maintenance and manufacturing workshops, processing units as well as social infrastructure in the areas of health and education.

Its activities are carried out in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the Provinces of Haut-Katanga, Lualaba and Haut-Lomami; and its head office is located in the city of Lubumbashi

About STL

STL - Société Congolaise pour le Traitement du Terril de Lubumbashi - is a historical company of the city of Lubumbashi, of which the Slag Heap and the Chimney are now the emblems. Its operations, which comply with RMI standards, produces Copper Cathodes, Germanium Hydroxide, Cobalt hydroxide, silver concentrate and Zinc Oxide, from the Slag Heap, through a pyro-metallurgical treatment plant and a hydrometallurgical treatment plant.



For more information

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