

Botswana warns of dangers in dash for African minerals

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African governments must be wary of the risks created by rising global competition for the continent's minerals, Botswana's mines minister, Lefoko Moagi, said, as world powers seek new sources of metals needed for the transition to a lower carbon economy.



Botswana's minister of minerals and energy, Lefoko Moagi, at the Investing in African Mining Indaba 2023 conference in Cape Town. Source: Reuters/Shelley Christians

"When there is a rush, people come in, take whatever they want to take, and go, leaving gaping holes in Africa," Moagi, whose remit also includes energy and "green technology", said in an interview with Reuters.

"If you want to push production because there is money that is being dangled, you start compromising on how you legislate, how you do your environmental permitting, how you consult your communities," he said. "There is a great danger there that Africa must watch out for."

Botswana is reviewing its mines and minerals legislation to "tighten up" laws on mine rehabilitation, for example, Moagi said. Mining accounts for around a fifth of Botswana's GDP and 80% of export earnings, with diamonds the biggest contributor.



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Reduce its reliance on diamonds

The country is also seeking to reduce its reliance on diamonds and is ramping up exports of coal as demand surges, even as the world seeks for the longer term to reduce coal use because of its carbon emissions.

Botswana says its coal supply can provide a solution to regional electricity shortages.

"While we have a window for coal, we can push it out, and help arrest the energy crisis within the region," Moagi said.

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