

Zambia to open Africa's largest copper mine

 By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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Zambia, which is endowed with substantial mineral resources, is to open Africa's largest copper mine in December this year.

Lumwana Copper Mine situated in north western Zambia, 45km from the border with volatile Democratic Republic of Congo, is expected to produce about 20 million tonnes of copper ore each year at an average of 450,000 tonnes of copper concentrate per annum.

In April, Zambia's Finance and National Planning Minister, Ng'andu Maganda confirmed that Australian mining giant Equinox Minerals is developing the mine to take advantage of strong prices for copper on the international market.

"The open-pit mine is expected to bring in large amounts of foreign investment," noted the minister.

The mining project is also expected to generate over 1,500 jobs during the construction phase and about 1,055 direct jobs in its full operation phase.

The ministry of Mines and Minerals Development noted that since the establishment of Zambia as a nation, copper has been and still is, the single largest contributor to the Zambian economy.

A statement from the ministry notes that depressed copper prices on the international markets, plus the under-capitalisation of our copper mines, have resulted in severe constraints on our economy.

"To address this problem and in order to ensure that the mining industry continues to play a crucial role in national development, the government has begun to take bold steps," says the statement.

A new Mining Act for Zambia, which holds Africa's biggest copper reserves, was put into place in 1995 with main features detailing on the divestiture of government from the business of mining through privatisation of the mines; the liberalisation of the fiscal policy; and the provision of several tax concessions to mining companies.

Zambia produced 515,618 metric tonnes of copper in 2006, an improvement by 1,5% from previous year.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He

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