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Japan Oil, Gas & Metals National Corporation

Division in Charge: Metals Technology Division, Metals Development Department

Tel: +81-3-6758-8029

PR in Charge: Public Relations Division

Tel: +81-3-6758-8106

Cobalt Recovery from Waste Rocks: JOGMEC Enters into Joint Research with Australia

A Step Toward Diversification of Cobalt Supply Sources for a Carbon-Neutral Society

JOGMEC (Head Office: Minato-ku, Tokyo; Chairman & CEO: Tetsuhiro Hosono) has agreed with the Department of Resources of the State of Queensland and the University of Queensland to conduct joint research on the technology to recover cobalt from waste rock of copper mines in Queensland on October 25.

Through this joint research, we aim to promote the effective utilization of unrecovered cobalt resources in Queensland and other parts of the world, and to contribute to the stable supply of minor metals indispensable for the realization of a carbon-neutral society.



Commemorative photo at the virtual signing ceremony

Cobalt is a minor metal that is essential for the realization of a carbon-neutral society, as it is used in batteries for electric vehicles, etc. However, there are concerns about its stable supply since its production is unevenly distributed in some countries and regions.

JOGMEC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a comprehensive and strategic partnership with Queensland, Australia in September 2013, and has been building a cooperative relationship. Australia has the world's second largest cobalt reserves, but its production is not large. Some copper ores mined in Australia contain significant cobalt that is lost to waste rock during processing.

Under these circumstances, the Queensland Geological Survey conducted a survey of cobalt resources in waste rock from copper mines, and the results were shared with JOGMEC. As a result of discussions with the State Government, JOGMEC has agreed to conduct a joint research project with the State Government and the University of Queensland on cobalt recovery technology from waste rock of copper mines. The period of the joint research is planned to be from October 2021 to June 2024.

Should this project yield notable results, it would be expected to contribute as new source of cobalt from the state. Additionally this would ensure potential for transferable production technology that could be applied to other countries and regions.

JOGMEC has established a basic policy and specific action plan for the realization of a carbon-neutral society under the "JOGMEC Carbon Neutral Initiative," and this joint research constitutes a part of the action plan.

■ Map of Queensland



Target Area : the area where cobalt is expected to be recovered.

■Reference

1) Formulation of "JOGMEC Carbon Neutral Initiative" :Basic policy and action plan for achieving a carbon-neutral society (May 21, 2021)

(URL) http://www.jogmec.go.jp/english/news/release/news_15_000001_00019.html

2) JOGMEC and The State Government of Queensland sign MOU to collaborate on natural resources (September 30, 2013)

(URL) http://www.jogmec.go.jp/english/news/release/news_10_000006.html