

Gahcho Kué Technical Sessions – Summary of discussion and suggestions

Representatives from federal government departments met on May 1, 2012 to discuss the upcoming Gahcho Kué technical sessions. This discussion mainly considered two formats for a technical session: 1) a formal question and answer style format as described in the draft agenda provided by MVEIRB, and 2) a workshop-style format that includes breakout groups and/or stations to discuss issues.

Technical session format:

Departments believe that there are benefits to both types of format discussed, and therefore encourage the Panel to consider a session that incorporates both.

Agenda:

Departments would like to see an agenda that provides room for both formal question/answer sessions as well as breakout groups, as necessary. Having a focused presentation followed by questions provides the opportunity for everyone present (and participating remotely) to participate in discussion. If it is clear that there remain issues with a specific topic, the Chair should recommend that the relevant parties have a separate meeting/breakout group to discuss the issue and then report back with a summary note and list of actions/commitments that can be posted to the registry. Departments would like to see the agenda actively managed by the Chair to ensure the session remains productive for most of the participants.

Presentations:

Presentations made by the proponent should be specific, and focused on issues that have arisen throughout the review (especially the information requests). There have already been two opportunities (during the De Beers-hosted session in October 2011, and the MVEIRB-hosted session in November/December 2011) to listen to general presentations from the proponent and gain an understanding of the project. It would be most useful if the presentations during the technical session are focused on issues that may still require resolution. These focused presentations, however, are not meant to preclude any questions that may be of a general nature or on a different topic. Federal departments will aim to provide De Beers and the Panel with suggested topics for presentations prior to the technical session.

Recording:

Departments see the value in having any presentations and question/answer sessions recorded and transcribed. Transcription is an effective and efficient way to ensure that questions and answers are accurately captured on the record.

If there are any additional breakout groups or meetings, those involved in the meeting should be responsible for providing a summary of discussion, action items, and any follow-up for posting on the public registry.

Set up:

The set-up for the technical session should not be too formal and all participants should have equal access/ability to ask questions. While it is understood that microphones are required to record the proceedings should they be transcribed, the technical session should have a more relaxed atmosphere than a public hearing.

Other topics for Panel consideration:

Commitments Table:

Departments would appreciate the opportunity for Parties to discuss how the developer's commitments table will be used at the conclusion of this review (and would like the Panel to consider adding this topic to the technical session agenda). It is important that this table be kept up-to-date throughout the review so that all parties are aware of the developer's proposed commitments to mitigate impacts. It is also imperative that parties agree on the wording and level of the commitments included, especially if the commitments listed could impact the Panel's determination of significance. Departments would appreciate if the Panel could provide clear direction on how this list of commitments will be used and validated.

"Parking Lot":

Departments would like to see the Panel maintain a summary of issues that may remain outstanding following the technical session and note when they are resolved. This list of issues should be maintained throughout the review so that is clear what issues have, and have not, been resolved. If resolved issues are brought up later during the review, the Panel can direct those parties to this list.