

WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL MINERALOGY (WGEM)

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Chairman : David Vaughan

(Attached document 2/4/03)

OUTLINE PROPOSAL FOR AN IMA WORKING GROUP ON *ENVIRONMENTAL MINERALOGY*

Background

This proposal arises out of a request from IMA President Ian Parsons to Professor David Vaughan that he chair a new Working group on Environmental Mineralogy for the IMA. As Council Members will appreciate, although much of what is now becoming identified with the field of environmental mineralogy has been taken by mineralogists for many years, its emergence as a distinct sub-discipline has been relatively recent. However, it is an area that is growing rapidly in its perceived importance, and most particularly, it is an interdisciplinary area that has the potential attract interest and support from a wider community than is normal for our science. Many more articles are now being published in the journals of our member societies that fall within this field; some journals (eg Mineralogical magazine) are planning regular issues on this theme. Various societies have held short courses and published review volumes in the area, notably MSA and EMU (the "Environmental Mineralogy" volume published by EMU and co-edited by myself has been well received). It is very clear that the IMA should be involved in promoting environmental mineralogy, and the obvious way to do so is to set up a working group.

Proposal

If Council agrees, I would set up an Environmental Mineralogy Working Group and, in consultation with the president (and possibly with someone as Vice-Chairman). I have a number of people in mind (but having not yet approached any of them, feel it is inappropriate to give names as yet). Officers would be in addition to national representatives. If the IMA constitution permits (and I believe it does), it would be best for us to select the initial officers and representatives of the more active countries (seeking advice where appropriate); if smaller countries wished to propose representatives, they would be welcome to do so.

Initially at least, the remit of this new group should be quite broad and include all aspects of the those natural and anthropogenic systems where the mineral world of the geosphere comes into contact with the hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere. It should also include the area sometimes referred to as "mineralogy and health" where mineralogists interact with medical researchers and practitioners. An announcement of the group would include fuller definition of its remit.

Activities of the working group would encompass those associated with other such IMA bodies (convening sessions at the general Meeting and at other international conferences, organising short courses and more specialist meetings, promoting and publicising the field etc). It should also be more active than many other groups in promoting/organising interdisciplinary meetings and workshops (with biologists, atmospheric scientists, medical scientists etc).

Concluding Statement

Mineralogy, by its very nature, should be at the hearth of the so-called environmental sciences, but is all too often left on the sidelines, with other disciplines setting the agenda. We need to reclaim our position as leaders of those who have the training and skills to provide a more rigorous, quantitative understanding of "the environment". Setting up an Environmental Mineralogy group within IMA is one small, but significant, step in this direction.

D.J. Vaughan, 2/4/03