

# Melissa “Mel” Sanderson to Champion Critical Minerals Sustainability at Future Minerals Forum 2025

written by Tracy Hughes | January 12, 2025

Melissa “[Mel](#)” Sanderson, Co-Chair of the [Critical Minerals Institute](#) (CMI), is set to play a pivotal role at the upcoming Future Minerals Forum (FMF) 2025, scheduled for January 14-16 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. As an expert in critical minerals, Sanderson will participate in multiple high-level roundtables and discussions, sharing her extensive insights into the sector, particularly on topics such as the Western industrial capacity for rare earths and the growing importance of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) practices.

The FMF 2025 is a highly anticipated event that attracts a global gathering of governments, international organizations, and industry leaders. The forum will tackle critical challenges facing the mining and minerals industry, with the theme “Year of Impact.” The discussions will focus on enhancing global supply chains, promoting sustainable mining practices, and fostering international collaboration, with particular attention on critical minerals like rare earth elements—key drivers in the green energy transition and technological innovation.

## **A Deep Passion for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

Sanderson’s unique background in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) will be a key highlight of her participation. With an extensive diplomatic career that includes a significant tenure at the American Embassy in Kinshasa, Sanderson’s work in the DRC has shaped her understanding of the complexities

surrounding mineral resource development in one of the world's most resource-rich yet challenging regions. During her time in the DRC, she played a critical role in re-establishing U.S.-DRC relations after years of conflict, helping the country navigate its first democratic elections in over four decades.

At FMF 2025, Sanderson will bring this wealth of experience to the table, particularly in a roundtable focused on the DRC and its mineral potential. These discussions will explore the challenges and opportunities of developing critical mineral resources in the region, while emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices and respecting local communities' rights. Sanderson's expertise in ESG, honed through years of hands-on experience, will play a critical role in addressing how companies can do business responsibly, not just in the DRC, but globally.

### **About the Critical Minerals Institute (CMI)**

As Co-Chair of the [Critical Minerals Institute](#) (CMI), Sanderson plays an integral role in advancing the global conversation around the sustainable development of critical minerals. CMI is a global organization that serves as a central hub for businesses, governments, and investors, providing valuable resources and insights into the strategic importance of critical minerals. These minerals are essential for the technological and industrial advancements that are reshaping the global economy. CMI drives innovation in the sector by fostering policy development and securing sustainable supply chains that will shape the future of industries like renewable energy, defense, and electronics.

### **Melissa Sanderson's Distinguished Career**

Melissa Sanderson's career spans over four decades, during which she has made significant contributions to international relations, mining, and sustainable development. Fluent in five

languages, she has held key roles in the U.S. Foreign Service and the private sector, where she has successfully merged government relations with sustainable development initiatives. In particular, her leadership as Director of International Affairs at Freeport-McMoRan (NYSE: FCX) positioned her as a global authority on stakeholder engagement and ESG best practices. Additionally, her work with [American Rare Earths](#) (ASX: ARR | OTCQB: ARRNF) as a Director has solidified her reputation as a key player in the rare earths sector, where she led a business transformation as Interim President for North America.

Her influence also extends into academia, where she serves as a Professor of Practice at the Thunderbird School of Global Management, educating future leaders on the intersection of global governance and sustainability. Sanderson's thought leadership is widely recognized, with her contributions featured in prominent outlets like The Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, and The New York Times. She is also a regular contributing columnist for InvestorNews.com. She is a sought-after speaker at major industry forums, including the upcoming FMF 2025 in Riyadh and the [CMI Summit IV](#), scheduled for May 13-14, 2025 in Toronto, Ontario.

Sanderson's multifaceted career, including her leadership at CMI, positions her at the forefront of the critical minerals sector. As a global consultant, she advises companies on the ESG+ framework, which integrates sustainability goals with cultural understanding, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles. Her work is dedicated to creating long-term, sustainable solutions for industries critical to the green energy transition and global economic development.

## **A Transformative Future**

The Future Minerals Forum 2025 promises to be a pivotal event

for the global minerals industry, and Sanderson's participation is poised to elevate the conversation around critical minerals. Her unique background, particularly in the DRC, along with her leadership at CMI, will help shape the future of the industry, particularly in advancing responsible sourcing and developing global solutions to critical minerals supply chain challenges. As the sector continues to evolve, Sanderson's insights will be invaluable in driving international collaboration, investment, and sustainable development in the years ahead.

### **Notable Speakers:**

The forum will feature prominent figures from the mining and mineral sectors, including:

- **Dominic Barton**, Chairman of Rio Tinto Group (LSE: RIO)
- **Máximo Pacheco**, Chairman of Codelco (Not publicly traded)
- **Duncan Wanblad**, CEO of Anglo American plc (LSE: AAL)
- **Mark Bristow**, CEO of Barrick Gold Corporation (NYSE: GOLD)
- **Tom Palmer**, President and CEO of Newmont Corporation (NYSE: NEM)
- **Graham Kerr**, CEO of South32 Limited (LSE: S32)
- **Kent Masters**, CEO of Albemarle Corporation (NYSE: ALB)
- **Catherine Raw**, Chief Development Officer at BHP Group Limited (LSE: BHP)
- **Jinghe Chen**, Executive Chairman of Zijin Mining Group Company Limited (HKG: 2899)
- **Jonathan Price**, CEO of Teck Resources Limited (TSX: TECK.B)
- **Jeremy Weir**, Executive Chairman and CEO of Trafigura Group
- **Mark Cutifani**, Chairman of Vale Base Metals
- **Bob Wilt**, CEO of Ma'aden
- **Jasper Jung**, Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives and Global Public Policy at General Motors
- **Joe Kaeser**, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Siemens

Energy and Daimler Truck

- **Robert Friedland**, Founder of Ivanhoe Mines, Ivanhoe Electric, and I-Pulse
- **HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman bin Abdulaziz**, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy
- **H.E. Bandar AlKhorayef**, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources
- **H.E. Mohammed Al-Jadaan**, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Finance
- **H.E. Khalid Al-Mudaifer**, Saudi Arabia's Vice-Minister for Mining Affairs
- **H.E. Khalid Al-Falih**, Minister of Investment
- **H.E. Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi**, Secretary General of Gulf Cooperation Council
- **H.E. Yousef bin Abdullah Al-Benyan**, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Education
- **H.E. Saleh Al Jasser**, Minister of Transport and Logistics Services
- **Mohammed A. Abunayyan**, Chairman of ACWA Power

For more information on the [Critical Minerals Institute](#), [click here](#).

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