



**“The opportunities for growth in the mining sector are bound to a change of activities”**

Philippe Gautier, President Sofremines:

## Services and training: the future?

France’s mining industry is experiencing a great diversification of its activities but proves that the decline of the national production did not necessarily mean decline of the industry as a whole. Anticipating the end of an era, France has indeed chosen to put its efforts on new activities bound to mining such as consulting and the implementation of projects abroad.

It appears today as a reference for African and most recently Asian countries, eager to take advantage of the French experience and integrate French engineers in their projects. In this regard, Sofremines, an engineering company, is offering intellectual services and, most recently, end-to-end project consultancy.

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Sofremines, “our job is not to make our customers decisions for them but to lead them to autonomy. We are not Manpower. We set-up the project and then we leave. We offer our clients suitable solutions that sometimes exceed their expectations. No wonder they come back to us.”

A former state-owned company and after several changes in its shareholding, Sofremines now belongs to its employees, and has reached financial stability. It employs 24 persons, has active subsidiaries in India, Nigeria and Tunisia and boasts a turnover of 3.5 million Euros according to its president.

Sofremines is present in about 15 countries thanks to its professionalism and flexibility.

Now unable to showcase its achievement in France, Sofremines takes potential customers to visit installations they have carried out abroad. “We recently took a delegation of Jordanians to visit the phosphate factory of Industries Chimiques du Senegal, whose capacity we have doubled, and they were very impressed! This kind of practice is very gratifying for us,” asserts Mr Gautier. Besides Senegal, Sofremines lead projects in Liberia, Guinea, Mauritania, Algeria, Syria, Cuba and Vietnam.

Training is another showcase

for French mining abroad. Since 1975, Cesmat (the Centre of Primary Material Studies, a branch of the prestigious Ecole des Mines) each year welcomes 70 trainees. Since its creation, alumni from over 100 countries have benefited from its superior training course.

“Being under the governance of the Ministry of Industry, all our study programmes are market driven,” explains Mr Nicolas Cheimanoff, General Secretary of Cesmat, “during a degree course of nine months our aim is to provide substantial knowledge dealing with the new issues faced by the sector. Although there are now a lack of mines in operation, we still

offer a mine of information!”

Cesmat offers seven study courses including mine exploitation, open-pit deposits, mine administration and a new course linked to environmental issues. A programme dealing with the water management is also being considered. For Mr Cheimanoff, “the mining sector is by nature very cyclical, so we have to be reactive.”

With the training of 2,000

managers globally, Cesmat has thus built-up an impressive international network from which French mining companies or equipment manufacturers benefit. “While we work for indirect economic benefits for the country,” says Mr Cheimanoff, “commerce is not our main vocation.” But he likes to point out that Cesmat has become a showcase for the French mining industry abroad.