

Dear Guests and AUA Community,

I am Alen Amirkhanian, the lead organizer of the event.

WORLDWIDE mining has had a contentious and checkered past. From countries as advanced as the US to the poorest ones in Africa and Latin America, mining has been a source of deep social inequities as well as environmental destruction and, at times, calamities.

Despite these, many governments consider mining a necessary evil. They understand that the mineral resources extracted are the building blocks of industries such as electronics, automotive, aerospace, construction, and so on.

In the past two decades, however, there have been some constructive developments. There are companies that have improved the mining process, employing less obtrusive technologies or instituting restorative closure of mines.

Importantly, some countries have been able to successfully use their extractive industries and make them the foundation of long-term, sustainable growth for their economies and an improved standard of living for the vast majority of their citizens.

Such constructive developments are almost always spurred by good public policy and grassroots pressure, demonstrating their critical importance.

On mining, there are many perspectives among environmentalists, activists, and thinkers. Some argue that mining has no role in Armenia's economy. Armenia is too small a country and its biodiversity and natural resources too precious to destroy for short-term gain.

On the other hand, there are people who are not against mining per se, but against the way mining is being carried out. When companies are exporting metals \$20 billion in market value and they leave behind \$300 million in taxes and salaries, a question of economic justice arises. The question of financing the future of this country arises.

When mining companies pollute the waters and lands with toxins and heavy metals, affecting public health and future livelihood of communities without compensating for these damages, some people start asking questions: why privatize profits and socialize costs?

Good public policy uses business to improve standard of living and the wealth for the greatest number of people, not the few.

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Saleem Ali will be sharing with us some of success stories on good policy from around the world. He will also tell us about some of the pitfalls to avoid.

Dr. Ali, has a very impressive body of work on mining and environmental sustainability. He is currently serving as the Director of the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at the University of Queensland, Australia. He is doing this on leave from University of Vermont (in the US) where is a Professor of Environmental Studies and Director of the Institute for Environmental Diplomacy and Security. His most recent book is *"Treasures of the Earth: Need, Greed and a Sustainable Future"* (Yale University Press).

The World Economic Forum chose him as a "Young Global Leader" in 2011. He has also been selected by the National Geographic Society as an "emerging explorer" and was profiled in "Forbes magazine" in September, 2009 as "The Alchemist."

Dr. Ali comes to us with his wide and diverse background. He grew up in Pakistan and is a US citizen. He has training both in the natural sciences as well as social sciences. He is a graduate of MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning. His graduate work focused on environmental conflict resolution.

Something that might interest this audience, he moderates a Yahoo Group called ECOMINERALS, with more than 1000 members. ECOMINERALS shares valuable work and research being done in the field of mining and environmental sustainability. You can search for ECOMINERALS on the internet and join the group, if you so wish.

It is with great pleasure that I invite Dr. Saleem Ali to the podium for what will no doubt be an enlightening talk.