

Press Release

September 22, 1998

MINORITY INTEREST ACQUIRED BY UNION MINIERE IN THE FRENCH COMPANY, VERTEX S.A., RENNES.

Union Minière, through its subsidiary Union Minière Invest France, has acquired a minority interest in the French company, Vertex, which is based in Rennes.

With the assistance of the Glass and Ceramics Laboratory, the Joint Research Unit of the University of Rennes and C.N.R.S., the National Science and Research Centre, this company, which was founded in 1996, by the Brittany Regional Development Company, Brienne Conseil et Finance (Paris), and Banque Populaire de l'ouest, has developed an industrial process for manufacturing infra-red glass using sulphur and selenium as the raw materials.

UM acquired this interest with a view to establishing a close partnership geared to developing new applications for infra-red glass.

In addition to the management and Union Minière Invest France, Vertex's shareholders still include some financial partners who were involved in setting up the company.

This new partnership reflects Union Minière's strategy to expand its range of activities in its Advanced Materials sector.

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Union Minière (UM), a Belgian-based, internationally active group, is a world leader in the non-ferrous metals sector.

The UM Group is established in several countries in Europe (mainly Belgium, France and Bulgaria), and in North America, Africa and the Far East. It is organised into decentralized business units which cover extraction, smelting, refining, transformation, recycling, engineering.

UM produces and sells more than twenty non-ferrous metals for basic and advanced technology industries, as well as for the construction sector. UM holds virtually 80% of the shares of SIBEKA, a group which operates in the natural diamond and synthetic abrasives sector.

UM's activities are split into six main lines of development : copper, zinc, precious metals, advanced materials, diamonds and technology & services. UM holds leading positions in each of its markets.

The Group generated a turnover of BEF 157 billion in 1997. UM currently employs some 12,000 people.

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