

February 15, 2005

Communiqué de presse

Degrémont to build the largest desalination plant in northern Chile, to supply the Antofagasta copper mine

Chile's second largest copper producer and exporter Minera Escondida Limitada (controlled by BHP Billiton from Australia) has commissioned Degrémont to design and build a seawater desalination facility using reverse osmosis, to supply the Antofagasta copper mine in northern Chile. The 28-million-dollar contract covers design, equipment supply and assembly, civil engineering and commissioning.

The facility will take raw water from the Pacific Ocean to produce a daily 45,000 m³ of process water for the mine, which is located in a desert area 9,200 ft above sea level.

Under the contract, one-third of the intended flow is to be supplied by September 2005 and the full flow by January 2006. The facility will have four racks of reverse osmosis membranes. Upstream of the membranes there will be a high-performance pre-treatment line combining the usual stages of screening and grit removal with Degrémont's innovative Rictor fast flotation system.

Mining is Chile's main industry and consumes large quantities of water. Using reverse osmosis to desalinate seawater conserves the region's surface water and enables mines to increase their output capacity rapidly to meet subsequent growth requirements.

With some 250 prior achievements and recent contracts in Curacao (Dutch West Indies), Fujairah (UAE) and Wadi Ma'In (Jordan), Degrémont has proven its ability to supply optimised solutions for desalination by reverse osmosis. Where freshwater resources are short, Degrémont desalination meets the needs of local authorities and industry.

Degrémont is the water treatment specialist within SUEZ Environnement. With business in 70 countries and nearly 3,500 staff, Degrémont generated sales of 900 million euros in 2003.

SUEZ Environnement, a branch of SUEZ, supplies services, plant and equipment essential to life and the protection of the environment: drinking water production and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, waste processing and recycling. With its three world brands – Ondeo (water), Degrémont (the water treatment specialist) and SITA (cleansing) – SUEZ Environnement generated sales of 12.3 billion euros in 2003 and employed 82,900 staff.

Press contact: Pierre-François Moizan / +33 (0) 1 46 25 63 68