

Chilean Workers Threaten to Continue Strike at World's Largest Copper Mine for Two Months



Santiago de Chile, February 15 (RHC)-- A labor strike at Chile's Escondida copper mine, the world's largest, entered its seventh day on Wednesday with few signs of speedy resolution as workers threaten to stop production for up to two months.

Workers began a strike at the Australian-run BHP Billiton mine on Thursday to put pressure on the company after failing to reach an agreement in wage negotiations. The union said its 2,500 members are committed to action and threatened a two-month work stoppage, leading BHP to admit that it will not be able to meet its contractual obligations.

As the world's largest copper mine, the strike threatens to disrupt global supplies of one of the most widely used industrial metals. Escondida produced 1.15 million tons of copper in 2015, or 6 percent of global output that year.

World supply concerns have led copper prices to hit a 20-month high, as Indonesia's Grasberg, the world's second largest copper mine, has an export ban, and Peru's large Las Bambas mine also faces protests.

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