

MEDIA STATEMENT

THE MINERALS COUNCIL CELEBRATES WOMEN'S COURAGE AND STRENGTH 'You strike a woman, you strike a rock'

Johannesburg, 08 August 2018: National Women's Day in South Africa commemorates the national march of women to petition against legislation that imposed on African women the requirement to carry the 'pass', as was already required of men¹.

On 9 August 1956, 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. Having delivered petitions containing more than 100,000 signatures at the then prime minister's office door, they stood silently outside for 30 minutes. A protest song composed in honour of the occasion was sung: Wathint'Abafazi Wathint'imbokodo! (When you strike a woman, you strike a rock). In the 62 years since, this phrase has come to represent the courage and strength of South African women. In 2006, a re-enactment of the march was staged for its 50th anniversary, with many of the 1956 march veterans attending.

Much has changed since then, both in South Africa and in the mining industry. The mining industry has committed itself to changing the profile of its workforce to include meaningful participation by women at all levels. Statistics indicate that women representation across the industry has improved over the past 15 years to 12%, while their retention in the industry means attitudes towards women are improving.

At the Minerals Council, representation by women on the Management Committee is well over 30%. As the month of August in South Africa is now dedicated to women, the Minerals Council takes this opportunity to showcase some of the women in key leadership positions:

Stephinah Mudau, Head: Environment, has been in the mining industry for 12 years. "The main challenge in the industry is that not many women have made it to senior management positions, especially in the environmental field." According to industry statistics, just 15% of management positions are held by women. Stephinah adds: "Much progress has been made



in changing attitudes towards women in the industry, however, much still needs to be done to get women into decision-making positions. Women should empower themselves more”.

Dr Thuthula Balfour, Head: Health, noted that the industry has changed since she first joined it 10 years ago and that while black women representation in leadership roles has evolved, further progress is required. She says: “Attitudes have changed as more people accept that women can make a positive contribution. As with all change, there will always be laggards who must be assisted to accept the new order of things”.

Zakithi Zama, Stakeholder Relations Manager, joined the mining industry just under three years ago at a time when women participation in the industry had improved considerably. Zakithi emphasises that young women should be trained and developed to enable them to participate in the industry. She adds: “This will ensure we sustain the gains made thus far. As a resource-rich country, it is in South Africa’s best interests to encourage a diverse workforce in the mines and especially participation by women. While the industry is progressing well, more coaching and mentoring opportunities with clearly defined goals and timelines for young women could fast-track improvements”.

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¹ *The 'pass' was an identification document which restricted a black South African's freedom of movement under apartheid, and allowed them to enter 'white' areas. The 'pass' had come into force under the Urban Areas Act (commonly known as the pass laws) of 1950.*