



Chamber of Mines of South Africa
Putting South Africa First



MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release

19 MARCH 2014

MINING SECTOR ACKNOWLEDGES STRIDES IN ADDRESSING OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN COMMEMORATION OF WORLD TUBERCULOSIS (TB) DAY

The Chamber of Mines and its tripartite stakeholders, government and labour will on the 24th of March 2014 jointly commemorate World TB day at the Popo Molefe stadium in Fochville Township (Kokosi) which will culminate in a Regional Ministerial meeting to be convened by the Deputy President, His Excellency Kgalema Motlanthe and the Minister of Health, Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi on the 25th of March 2014 at the Sandton Convention Centre.

As part of the Chamber of Mines' member companies' commitment to ensuring the health and safety of employees, as well as acknowledging that legacy issues in the sector exist, interventions have been put in place to deal with occupational health diseases.

Meaningfully contributing to the present and the future

The Chamber of Mines representing its member companies over the years has prioritised three initiatives to address TB;

- **Promoting the reduction of dust levels**

The industry established the Milestones on Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH) Learning Hub in 2008, with a specific team on promotion of leading practices in dust control. Various practices have over the years been promoted and adopted by companies and substantial gains in dust control have been achieved.

- **Tracking progress on TB management through TB reviews**

The TB Review Tool was developed by the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) for reviewing TB programmes. Through this tool the Chamber of Mines has in the past two years conducted external audits of TB programmes in the gold and platinum sectors in 2011 and 2012 respectively. The audits revealed cure rates of 82.4% in gold and 83.7% in platinum. These rates, although good, still fall short of the international target of 85% cure rate and the challenge is thus for us to do more to achieve the international target.

Audits have recently been completed in the coal sector.

A major contribution from the TB review tool is the identification of challenges that persist across the mining sector and the Chamber of Mines has prioritized these.

- **Ensuring uniformity to address the issue of contractors.**

The challenge of different types of health services provided to contractors was identified by the TB Reviews. The Chamber of Mines has taken steps to address this particular challenge and has adopted an industry position where contractors are managed similarly to permanent employees – ensuring that TB services are provided in a uniform manner to all employees.

“We have elevated occupational health to the same level as safety because the two are mutually inclusive and benefit both the employees and the companies. We continue dedicating resources to the learning hub so that the sector implements what works best across the board”, said Graham Briggs, Vice President of the Chamber and CEO of Harmony Gold Mining Company Limited.

Acknowledging our past

The risk of contracting TB in gold companies arises from silica dust exposure and HIV infection. Research has put the risk of developing TB as high as three (3) times for individuals with silicosis and up to six (6) times for those with HIV with the combined effect potentially being eighteen (18) times. The key risk for mineworkers that results in higher HIV rates is migrancy.

Rates of HIV in the sector were historically much higher than those in the average adult South African population with rates of up to 30% HIV positivity reported in the early 2000s. These rates have reduced over the years to close to the South African average which is 18%. “For us the partnership and co-ordination with government on how best we can deploy interventions and access to health facilities for workers who have exited the mining sector remains critical as it cuts to the core of addressing the legacies of the past”, Briggs added.

The Chamber, lead by its Vice President, Graham Briggs, will also participate in the Regional Ministerial Meeting which will see the convergence of some Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries and other multilateral forum representatives to highlight progress in developing a regional response to TB within the mining sector. This initiative is as a result of the SADC Declaration on TB in the mines.

Issued by the

Chamber of Mines South Africa

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