

**COM CEO, ROGER BAXTER: KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT MEMORIAL FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE
KINROSS DISASTER, SECUNDA**

16 SEPTEMBER 2016

Programme director, survivors of the Kinross disaster and family members of the deceased, Minister Zwane, Premier Mabuza, the Mayor of Evander, the NUM Regional Chairperson Mr Mohlala, the NUM National Chairperson of Health and Safety, The CEO of Pan African Resources Mr Loots, traditional and religious leaders, mineworkers, representatives of the trade unions – all protocol observed.

We are here today to honour and pay tribute to those 177 people who died on that terrible day, 16 September 1986, just over 30 years ago. We also recognise those who were left behind – their families, friends and colleagues. We must also remember the 235 people that were injured in the tragedy.

We have just heard from the survivors who are with us about the events underground that day.

We know that if we had known then what we know today this tragedy could almost certainly not have happened. Lessons were learned at Kinross which continue to save lives even today.

At a special meeting of the Chamber office bearers and executives on 17 September 1986, several significant steps were taken that have had far-reaching ramifications, including the establishment of a Hazardous Material Unit under the Chamber's research arm. That unit led investigations into the use of various materials underground, which among other things, led to the banning of polyurethane as a sealant. A week later, on 23 September 1986, at a further meeting, the Chamber resolved to pursue research into the use of self-contained self-rescuers and refuge bays on gold mines. Research on these had previously been confined to coal mines to deal with the presence of methane.

When that first spark flared, many of those underground had little chance of survival. I cannot begin to imagine what it must have been like on that day.

We must believe that today it would be different. In 2015, Harmony Gold experienced an underground fire at its Kusasalethu mine where through the successful implementation of refuge bays, self-rescuers and the operation undertaken by mine rescue teams, the fire was contained and 486 lives saved.

The impetus created by the Kinross tragedy remains with us today. There is still much to be done when it comes to safety. The safety of employees underground is absolutely paramount – and “zero harm” is the aim of all Chamber of Mines members.



To achieve this goal, it is crucial that we all work together – mining companies, employees at all levels, trade unions, the department of Mineral Resources and the Chamber. We have formed the CEO Zero Harm leadership group to assist us. The MHSC continues to do important work and the Chamber's MOSH learning HUB is also doing good work to share leading practice and to continue to improve health and safety.

The Mine Rescue Service is a shining example of the commitment of South African mineworkers to the safety and lives of their colleagues. 900 men, across South Africa, working as volunteers to provide the resources and expertise for an effective emergency service

Minister, I know you have raised concerns about the number of fatalities so far this year. We share your concern, and pledge to do everything possible – working with you, with trade unions and with companies and their employees – to rectify the situation and to continue to improve our safety record.

The Chamber is committed to the 2024 occupational safety milestones through which we seek to eliminate fatalities and reduce injuries. Every fatality is one too many

After the proceedings here, we will be going first to the Kinross memorial and then to the Winkelhaak Cemetery. That mine employees who died as the result of accidents and illness at work should be treated in such a disrespectful manner as to be buried in unmarked graves is heart-breaking.

As we acknowledge the individual humanity of the people who are buried there – even if we cannot know all their names – we must also acknowledge that not nearly enough has been done, and that more must be done, to repair the damage done to South Africa, to our neighbours and to so many of our people by the way the mining industry used to operate in this country.

At a leadership level we are strongly committed to our journey towards zero harm, in partnership with government and organised labour.

Thank you for including the Chamber in today's commemoration.