

MEDIA STATEMENT

THE MINERALS COUNCIL SOUTH AFRICA MOURNS THE PASSING OF MICHAEL SPICER, A REMARKABLE AND INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS LEADER

Johannesburg, 11 March 2022. The unexpected passing of Michael Spicer, an influential businessman, leader and intellectual who helped steer South Africa to democracy, is a loss for our country, says Minerals Council South Africa CEO, Roger Baxter.

“We are profoundly shocked on hearing of the passing of Michael who played such a significant role in our country’s history and championing business. Our deepest condolences go to Michael’s family,” Baxter says.

“He was a remarkable person who achieved so much good for so many people. As an executive director at Anglo American, we worked closely on a number of issues,” he says.

With a Masters in History with distinction from Rhodes University, Michael was one of those rare individuals who learnt from history and worked tirelessly to make sure it did not repeat itself.

He joined Anglo American in 1985, rising to the position of Executive Vice President of the multi-national resources company in 1999. He stayed on with Anglo after it moved its primary listing to London and was the chair of Anglo American South Africa when he retired in 2015.

It was during his time at Anglo American, and working closely with then-chairman Gavin Relly, that he played a key role in engaging the then-banned African National Congress (ANC), opening the way for business to engage the exiled party and start political negotiations that culminated in the landmark 1994 elections and peaceful transfer of power.

In his role as deputy chairman of the Consultative Business Movement (CBM), he helped facilitate these engagements. The CBM was then instrumental in drawing up South Africa’s new constitution.



“The major point to make about this transitional period was that leading businesses invested heavily in influencing the transition because they believed it was necessary for their short, medium and long term interests,” Michael wrote in 2016 as he traced the role of business in the national discourse from shortly before 1994 into the fractious years under then-President Jacob Zuma when relations with the government soured and became deeply acrimonious and distrustful.

“Business and government communities in South Africa are less homogenous and have the burden of an apartheid past and an increasingly fractious liberation movement held together more by referencing the divided past than building the unified future,” he noted in a remarkably prescient observation.

Michael was a driving force behind unifying big business in its engagement with the government. He served as CEO of Business Leadership South Africa, an influential organisation.

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