

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINERALS COUNCIL SOUTH AFRICA CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Johannesburg, 7 March 2024. The Minerals Council South Africa marks 113 years since International Women's Day was first officially observed in 1911.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is ***Inspire Inclusion***.

Today we will hear from 10 inspirational women in the Minerals Council's Women in Mining Safety Heroes campaign who were nominated by their colleagues for the work they've done to make their workplaces and the industry safer. The annual Women in Mining Heroes campaign run by the Mineral Council on behalf of its more than 70 member companies and associations gives inspiration to women in the mining industry that their contributions are recognised and valued. Young women considering a career in mining can take inspiration from our Heroes and they can see future careers for themselves in which they can realise their full potential and make a difference.

We will hear from our colleagues about inclusion of women in the mining industry either directly or through increased business opportunities created through mine-based procurement programmes that have dramatically increased the number of women-owned businesses in the supply chains servicing the industry.

We will reflect on the progress women have made in the mining industry, which was once the preserve of men doing dangerous and difficult jobs in tough conditions. Since our country adopted its new Constitution in 1998 and mining companies have complied with the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act after its implementation in 2004, the mining industry now employs women across all aspects of operations. Women fill more than 72,000 mining jobs, accounting for 15% of the entire workforce of 477,000 people. The mining industry represents nearly 5% of South Africa's workforce.

We are justifiably proud of the advances the industry has made in the past two decades, but there is still a long way to go for the sector to be fully inclusive and transformed. We are untiring in our work to make the mining industry a safe, accommodating, accepting career for women, where they can flourish and be promoted into senior roles without their gender being a factor.



Women are leading some of South Africa's major mining companies, with Dr Nombasa Tsengwa as the CEO of Exxaro Resources and Mpumi Zikalala the CEO of Kumba Iron Ore, both large and complex companies.

Recently, Natascha Viljoen was head hunted from her role as CEO of Anglo American Platinum by American gold miner Newmont Mining, the world's largest gold producer, to be its Chief Operating Officer. Marna Cloete is President of Canada's Ivanhoe Mines, which has a diverse portfolio including the new platinum group metals mine, Ivanplats in Limpopo, and copper mines in Democratic Republic of Congo.

These women are an inspiration for all women in the mining industry. They are in their roles because they are the best at what they do, and they have broken the glass ceiling to prove women can run mining companies.

The mining industry in South Africa has come a long way since Dale Pearson was the first woman to obtain a mine engineering degree in 1994, and Celiwe Mosoane was the first black woman to obtain her mine engineering degree a decade later in 2005.

The South African legislative framework underpinning workplace policies and transformation efforts has certainly bolstered the number of women participating in mining, especially in core mining roles. The contribution of regulations, pressure from advocacy groups, and the willingness of the private sector to change certainly can be applauded for the gains made thus far.

The roots of International Women's Day can be traced back to women taking to the streets in New York to demand better working conditions, shorter hours, better pay, and voting rights. While some of these demands have been met, a century later there are still pay discrepancies between men and women, unequal access to careers, promotions, and business opportunities, working conditions in some instances are not safe or healthy for women and men. Women have made progress but, as I said earlier, we still have a long way to go.

In South Africa, as in many other countries, women are not free from the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide. Mining companies have a zero tolerance approach to GBVF, but our mines are reflective of the society from which our employees come. Mining companies run programmes, interventions and initiatives to raise awareness of GBVF and to combat it at the workplace and at homes, but we need all our stakeholders, internal and external to join us in our efforts to eradicate violence, bullying and murders of women.

The Minerals Council and its members have partnered with the National Prosecuting Authority and GBVF Response Fund to support Thuthuzela Care Centres, which are places of refuge, support and legal assistance in communities for the victims of abuse. This is a significant intervention by the mining industry to address GBVF outside mine gates and to provide support to those in need in our host communities.

The economic empowerment and emancipation of women in business is a critical lever to not only transform society but to ensure women's independence in the face of gender-based violence, as is stipulated in the National Strategic Plan on GBVF.

To this end and prompted by our partnership with the Women's Economic Assembly (WECONA), the Minerals Council commissioned a baseline study into the support of women-owned businesses by our member companies during 2023. The outcomes of this study have given us key insights into the support provided to women entrepreneurs through mining companies' supply chain and enterprise development programmes. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done in this regard, as mining is at the forefront of major economic sectors directly and indirectly employ more women. We recognise the potential positive impact that can be achieved through the increased collaboration with all our stakeholders to broaden and deepen these initiatives.

The mining sector is not perfect, despite all the work we are doing to make mining an inclusive and safe place for women. Examples of the sector's willingness to look hard at itself, find and understand weaknesses and to introduce corrective actions.

Australia's Rio Tinto made public its Everyday Respect report in 2022, highlighting the bullying, sexual harassment and racism at its global operations. It was a watershed moment for the global and South African mining industry. It was a report that led to deep introspection by the industry.

South Africa's Gold Fields conducted a similar study of its operations and released its Respectful Workplace report in 2023. It was an unflinching, brave and critical self-assessment of the lived experience of its employees. The report serves as an integral part of Gold Fields' transformational culture journey. Gold Fields has undertaken to improve the working environment to ensure that these experiences are not repeated, and it has committed to implementing all 21 recommended actions in the report.

It is through these initiatives that we realise how far we still have to go to create the safe, inclusive, racism-free industry we all aspire to and that we are working so hard to achieve.

Though we have made inroads in realising a diverse and equitable mining sector, we are still far from the targets we have set before us. The International Labour Organisation defines a

gender-balanced workplace as having a 40% - 60% representation of women and men as a baseline for a sustainable organisation. In the mining sector, this translates to 3 - 4 women in a crew of 8 -12. We are not there yet.

The Minerals Council as a partner in the Mandela Mining Precinct with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, is driving a programme of modernisation to make mining safer and more productive. One of the key outcomes of the modernisation work is the Isidingo Drill, which is light and ergonomically suitable for women to use as rock drill operators, normally a job ringfenced for strong, tough men. Improved underground lighting not only makes working safer, but it is also a factor in derisking the work environment for women.

In tracking our progress on our transformation journey, the Minerals Council and its members have redefined the metrics we use to measure our gender diversity and inclusion. Using the data we've collected over the past three years since the launch of our reporting dashboard, we have identified areas needing more attention to drive a culture change across the sector to realise an inclusive, diverse and equitable workforce which will underpin the success and sustainability of the mining industry.

As an Industry we believe in collaboration and learning from each other to replicate leading and best practices. And so, while we can look back at past successes on our transformation journey, we are also ready to roll up our sleeves, learn from one another, and collectively do the work required to invest in women and accelerate progress.

For further queries:

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