

International Women's Day

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Opening remarks

The United Nations' International Women's Day has been celebrated since March 1911, a full 113 years ago. The genesis of this day has its roots in women taking to the streets to demand better working conditions, better pay, and voting rights. Over a hundred years on, women the world over are still fighting for equal pay, equitable access to career and business opportunities and freedom from physical, psychological and sexual assault in communities, in-transit to and from work and, unfortunately, at work.

Much progress has been made in the past two decades on many areas of women empowerment and investing in women than ever before. However, still so much more has to be done to change what was systemically, legally and socially acceptable for decades in society and at work.

With the coming election day on 29 May, it's important that we all exercise our rights to vote. Let us not take it for granted. Many women and men have fought for this right for decades. In some countries, the right to vote is not as easily accessible as we have it. It's important we continue to use our voice for future generations.

Globally, advocacy groups, governments and the private sector have worked tirelessly to redress the injustices of the past, and much progress has been made to create safe, equitable and inclusive workplaces. The mining sector has pulled its weight. We are not ignorant to the many challenges that exist in the global mining sector, including in South Africa. Examples of

the sector's willingness to introspect and course correct can be found in the Rio Tinto Everyday Respect report, which was published in 2022 as well as the recent Gold Fields Respectful Workplace, published in 2023, amongst other efforts.

The mining industry in South Africa has come a long way from when the first woman, Ms Dale Pearson, obtained a mining engineering degree in 1994 and the first black women, Ms Celiwe Mosoane, obtained hers a decade later in 2005.

Today we can boast of leading women in the mining industry.

Women are heading some of South Africa's major mining companies, with Dr Nombasa Tsengwa as the CEO of Exxaro Resources and Ms Mpumi Zikalala the CEO of Kumba Iron Ore, both large and complex companies which make significant contributions to our economy.

Recently, Ms 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. Our own Ms 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 mining globally.

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 legislation, advocacy groups, including labour, and the willingness of the private sector to meaningfully partner with these stakeholders, can certainly be applauded for the gains made so far.

A notable mention is the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) which was passed in 2002 to make provision for equitable access to, and sustainable development of, the nation's mineral and petroleum resources. It made sure the transformation role and participation of role was part of that process, including through the Mining Charter. Women were included in the mining sector because of these developments.

Through continuous efforts of various industry role players, we have seen an increase in the numbers of women participating in mining from an estimated 3% in 2002 to 15% of the total mining workforce of 477,000 in 2023.

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 respectively as a baseline for a sustainable organisation. In the mining sector, this translates to 3-4 women in a crew of 8-12 people. When we look at the current statistics, this is a sobering reality. We do know three years ago, we only had 50,000 women in the mining sector, now we have 72,000 women in the workspace.

This year's International Women's Day theme, Invest in Women: Accelerate progress, is a call to definitive action that cuts across organisations and the whole mining value chain. Not only do we have to collectively make the necessary changes at organisational levels by integrating gender into core business strategies and operational practices, but we are obliged to do so within our societies to root out social ills such as gender-based violence and femicide – GBVF -- but to also create sustainable societies within which we can all operate and thrive.

The mining industry is playing a crucial role in the fight against GBVF. The Minerals Council partnership with the NPA and The GBVF Response Fund, mining companies have come together to pledge financial support to build, refurbish and support the Thuthuzela Care Centre's that offer much needed after-care services to survivors of GBV. This is an example of how we can come together to make a difference where it matters. Through this initiative, mining companies realise it is not enough to be narrowly focused in finding solutions to creating safe working spaces for current and future employees. We are rolling up our sleeves to be the change we want to see in the communities within which we operate and across our nation.

I would like to thank our CEOs who within their companies champion Thuthuzela Care Centres, including Glencore CEO Japie Fullard who was one of the first to put up his hand for Glencore to build a fully comprehensive Thuthuzela Care Centre.

Further to this, women's economic empowerment is a critical lever not only to drive and progress transformation, but also to ensure women's independence in the face of gender-based violence, as is also stipulated in the National Strategic Plan on GBVF.

To this end, and also as prompted by our partnership with the Women's Economic Assembly (Wecona), as the Minerals Council, we commissioned a baseline study in 2023 into the support of women-owned businesses by our member companies. This early study has afforded us key insights into the immense support provided to women entrepreneurs through the supply chain and enterprise development programmes. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done in this regard for mining as an industry to be at the forefront of bringing women into the economy. We can't do this alone as we also recognise the potential positive impact that can be achieved through the increased collaborations of all stakeholders.

Today we will celebrate 10 amazing, awesome, brilliant women who are our heroes in safety. It is very exciting that every year for the past four years we celebrate our women colleagues who are heroes in specific areas of their professions in the mining industry. Today, it is very poignant we celebrate women who are leading in safety.

In tracking our progress on our transformation journey, we have redefined the metrics we measure on our gender diversity and inclusion dashboard. Using the data we've collected over the past 3 years since the launch of our dashboard, we have been able to identify areas that need more attention to further inform our policies and drive a complete culture change across the sector to realise the inclusive, diverse and equitable workforce that will underpin a successful and sustainable mining industry.

As an Industry we believe in collaboration and learning from each other to replicate 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.

This can't wait for another 100 years. I know we are all committed to this and that it can be done during our life time.

Happy International Women's Day.