

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

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### **MINERALS COUNCIL SOUTH AFRICA NOTES A HISTORIC FIRST IN MINE SAFETY, WITH NO FALLS OF GROUND FATALITIES IN GOLD AND PGM MINES IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2022**

**Johannesburg, 6 May:** The Minerals Council South Africa is encouraged to note there were no fatalities related to Falls of Ground (FoG) in gold and platinum group metals (PGM) mines in the first quarter of 2022, which is a historic first for the mining industry.

This is important because managing the FoG risk in gold and platinum is one of global mining's most difficult challenges.

Mine safety came under renewed scrutiny by the Minerals Council and its 78 members after two successive years of regressions in fatalities. Falls of Ground have been one of the leading sources of fatalities on South Africa's deep-level, hard-rock mines and the industry has developed a special focus on eliminating these incidents towards its goal of zero harm.

In the first quarter of 2022, there was one FoG fatality at a coal mine, which is an unusual event.

"This is the first time ever our gold and PGM mines have not had a Fall of Ground fatality in the first three months of the year. This impressive record is extending into the fifth month in these two sectors. These things don't just happen. A lot of effort that goes into these safety initiatives by companies and organised labour," says Dr Sizwe Phakathi, Head of Safety at the Minerals Council.

In the first quarter of 2020, there were six FoG-related fatalities, and seven and nine in the two preceding years respectively.

As at 6 May 2022, the industry has recorded 15 fatalities so far this year, compared to 18 deaths in the same period in 2021.

The Minerals Council Board renewed the industry's focus on safety after last year's 74 fatalities, up from 60 in 2020. These were disappointing and unacceptable regressions from the record low 51 fatalities in 2019. In December 2021, the Board convened a special



meeting and agreed eight interventions for members to implement immediately to first halt the regression and then reverse the trend.

The number of Falls of Ground fatalities has fallen to an annual average of 24 in the 2016-2020 period from an average of 111 a year between 2001-2005, a 78% improvement.

The key interventions to address FoG incidents were the implementation of entry examinations and actively making working areas safe daily from 2009. In 2012, netting and bolting of tunnel roofs and walls were introduced. From 2016, there were annual initiatives to address rock bursts and gravity-induced Falls of Ground.

Technology has proved successful in significantly reducing human exposure to rock bursts, cutting rock-burst related fatalities to four in 2021 from 48 in 2003. Gravity-induced rockfalls remain an area of concern and are a key focus of work for the mining industry.

The Minerals Council's CEO Zero Harm Forum has agreed a six-pillar Fall of Ground Action Plan (FOGAP) in conjunction with professional mining associations for its members to implement to address these incidents. The Action Plan, approved in July 2021, includes a financial investment of R46 million over five years.

On 31 March 2022, the Minerals Council, in partnership with the Association of Mine Managers of South Africa, the South African Collieries Managers Association, the South African National Institute of Rock Engineering, and the Rock Engineering Technical Committee, held a FoG Day of Learning. Close to 200 delegates attended the event for an overview of the FOGAP, and to learn from their peers about leading practices and new research projects geared towards eliminating FoG fatalities.

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