

**EQUITY IN MINING IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY – SPEECH BY NOLITHA
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Today we gather to mark the International Day of Women in Mining which is celebrated annually on 15 June. This year's theme, *Equity in Mining is Everyone's Responsibility*, follows on the 2023 theme of *international Women's day which was Embracing Equity*. Today we all take time to pause and reflect on what we have achieved in the South African mining industry to ensure gender diversity and equality, and the journey that still lies ahead us.

Over the past decade, a considerable effort has been made to increase gender equality and foster transformation within the mining sector. A sector that we all know has been historically male-dominated and to this day we need to continue to push the agenda in an industry that employs 72,000 women out of a workforce of 475,000. This is not reflective of South African demographics, neither is it reflective of the demographics of students enrolling for and graduating from mining and mining related courses in universities.

Gender Equality is a human right and a business imperative. There are no longer any debates about the need to transform nor the urgency to implement policies and procedures that will move the needle significantly towards a fully transformed mining industry.

However, in seeking to transform our industry, we cannot ignore the many social and economic burdens that stifle society today, burdens that particularly affect the host-communities in which we operate and from which our colleagues and members of staff come. Burdens that are as a result of our long and difficult history as a country but which are also due to the systemic and cultural challenges that result in unemployment and the scourge of gender-based violence.

Though we continue to strive for gender equality, we need to also focus on ensuring gender equity within the mining sector. I dare say, ensuring equity is more important given our

historical, political, economic and social context, especially if we wish to create sustainable mining into the future.

A focus on equity will move the dial on transformation as it will significantly bolster diversity and inclusion initiatives across the board. Unlike equality, which focuses on providing equal resources, regardless of context, ensuring equity focuses on the process of a just and fair distribution of resources, not in spite of, but because of someone's historical experiences or social position. Focusing on equity requires bold leadership. It requires sometimes venturing into uncharted territory, and it is the right thing to do. Not only that, but we also note that in order to make real the objectives of Pillar Five under the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence, we need to ensure that women are specifically empowered to make the correct decisions for their safety and well-being thereby ensuring we achieve high levels of gender equity which strengthens our national fight against GBV.

Today, we will hear and learn from our colleagues about the programmes they have in place that support women-owned business through procurement at their respective organisations. We will hear of their successes in enterprise development, as well as take note of the challenges and areas where we can come together as an industry to chart our way forward because Equity in Mining is Everyone's Responsibility.

We know that the mining sector is a driver of transformation and social upliftment in the current troubled local economy where one in three adults cannot find a job. We need to come up with actionable, sustainable initiatives that make an impact to ensure we continue #MakingMiningMatter across our communities. Through procurement and the enterprise development initiatives, we have the financial power, and the reach to not only unlock individuals' income generating capacity, but also influence for increased education and the transfer of much needed skills. It is a well-documented and researched fact that support of women-owned businesses has a multiplier effect. However, we must caution on only developing enterprises that are far removed from our core mining business. Yes, those are important and necessary, however, we need to focus on transformation that positively changes the total mining value-chain. That is the equity we wish to see in the industry.

Through mining's total economic contribution, we have enabled local companies to grow and thrive by being very deliberate about procuring from local suppliers in our host communities; those owned by black South Africans and those owned by women and young people.

The mining and quarrying sector spent R504 billion in 2022 on buying goods and services. The mining industry strives to allocate 60-80% of its annual procurement expenditure on HDSA-empowered companies, which includes black-owned, women-owned and youth-owned companies.

The industry spends more than 1% of its net profit after tax on community development projects annually. Mining companies often implement social development initiatives before they start production or selling products. In order to continue on this growth trajectory, it is important to have open dialogue around where the real needs are, the challenges experienced by our peers in providing these programmes as well as highlighting opportunities to collaborate and scale up our efforts.

Our country has a horrific record of gender-based violence and femicide. The latest statistics from the police show that out of the 6,289 people murdered in the first three months of this year, 969 were women and 245 were children. Compared to the same period a year ago, the number of women murdered increased by 71.

Police recorded 10,512 cases of rape in the first three months of this year. This number represents an average of 117 women a day who are raped.

The United Nations entity, UN Women, estimates that fewer than 40% of women experiencing violence seek help, with the majority of those who do turning to family and friends rather than going to the police or hospitals. The numbers reported by our police may indeed be the tip of a particularly large iceberg and one we in the mining industry are actively addressing through programmes, initiatives and zero tolerance for gender-based violence and femicide.

While mining companies can and do implement policies inside the mine gates to address this terrible scourge, we must become more active in our host communities from which we employ our staff. To this end, the Minerals Council and its members, which represent 90% of the mining workforce, launched a partnership last December with the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and GBVF Response Fund to support gender-based violence response centres called Thuthuzela Care Centres in mining communities and labour-sending areas. Further to this, we recognise the importance of working together with external stakeholders such as the office of the Presidency and WECONA to localise the objectives of pillar 5 of the National Strategic Plan

on GBVF, which emphasises the fundamental role of increased women's economic empowerment in reducing the scourge of GBVF in our communities. And thus, through mining companies' procurement spend and allocation, we can make a considerable dent in the horrific incidences of GBVF in our host-communities by supporting women-owned businesses.

Education is key to empowerment of women and communities. The mining sector spent more than R5 billion on human resources development in 2022, with a further R1.7 billion paid through the skills development levy.

A study by The International Institute for Sustainable Development released last year found more women and girls are entering and completing community college, technical vocational education and training (TVET) college, and university studies in technical and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM-) based learning streams than men.

The research, titled *Gendered Analysis of Employment and Skills in the Large-Scale Mining Sector in South Africa*, noted that although there were more women and girls entering these streams, the entrance or retention of women in the mining industry was low.

Championing gender equity is everyone's responsibility and can no longer be limited to the enclave of our mining operations. For the sake of a more just, equitable and sustainable society, our work must extend beyond our employees and be felt in our host communities, our suppliers and service providers.

The mining industry has a powerful tool in its arsenal to effect these changes. Through our social and labour plans, which underpin our mining rights, we can be the change we wish to see in the world. We have the potential to deliver maximum impact by consolidating our efforts, not only between mining companies, but with labour, communities, non-governmental organisations, academia, and government structures at local and national levels.

The mining industry has made significant progress with its gender equity programmes but there is a long way still to go. Equity in mining is everyone's responsibility and it is a responsibility we take very seriously.

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