



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Current mining practices not working for Africa's people

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mining is not working for the people of Africa and current mining practices are causing harm and damage to the health, wellbeing and survival of communities on the continent.

This is the view of the Executive Director of Bench Marks Foundation, John Capel, at the conclusion of the annual Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) in Cape Town today, who said this had become very clear at the indaba.

The indaba, which is in its eighth year, meets concurrently with the African Mining Indaba, at which civil society is not represented.

Capel noted that there had been robust debate during the conference about the Africa Mining Vision (AMV), a United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa document that was adopted in 2008.

"It was clear that civil society representatives at the AMI have different views and understanding of the Africa Mining Vision, and that there is no broad consensus on its being a basis for the future of mining on the continent.

"The AMV has been sponsored by outside agencies and could become a model to allow corporations to continue looting Africa's resources," he said.

He added that the only effective way to bring benefits to the people of Africa was to build up community power and monitoring capacity.

Too many governments in Africa have become part of the problem through their political patronage, whereas they should be representing people and their needs.

"The revolving doors between governments and multi-national corporations conflict governments in their oversight roles," he said.

Capel noted that the advent of electric-powered cars would open up a huge demand for new minerals in Africa.

"It's important to watch that this development does not lead to the developed northern countries benefitting at the expense of Africa," he said.

A resolution at the end of the indaba was due to be delivered to the Mining Indaba following a march by delegates to its meeting place. It included the following calls for African governments to:

- Develop an optimal land-use framework to determine whether mining should or not take place in a particular area;

- Push harder for stronger and better regulatory institutions to ensure that the benefits of extraction are shared equitably;
- Employ taxation as an important strategic tool to foster linkages between mining activities and the large national economy.

On environmental, artisanal and small-scale mining and social protection, the indaba resolved to urge African governments to:

- Set aside part of revenues from extractive industries to fund basic income/grants to vulnerable groups in society;
- Legislate corporate social responsibility programmes and not view them as philanthropic practices by the private sector.

A further call was made for African governments to use experts to strengthen state capacity in negotiating better agreements with multi-national corporations.

African governments should also actively shift from the export of raw minerals to domestic value addition in order to create jobs and better linkages between the extractive sector and the broader national economies.

Companies were urged to recognise that traditional leaders are not community members and therefore need to carry out proper and thorough consultation with communities.

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Bench Marks Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation mandated by churches to monitor the practices of multi-national corporations to

- ensure they respect human rights;
- protect the environment;
- ensure that profit-making is not done at the expense of other interest groups; and
- ensure that those most negatively impacted upon are heard, protected and accommodated within the business plans of the corporations.

The Foundation was launched in 2001 by the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka who chairs the organisation and by member churches of the SACC.

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