



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Militarisation of Kumba's security unacceptable

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A increase in ex-combatants employed as Kumba Iron Ore's mining security impacts negatively on the rights of mine works and surrounding communities, according to the Bench Marks Foundation's new report entitled 'Floating or sinking' Social Licence to Operation (SLO): Kumba Iron Ore Limited released on 3 June 2015.

"This is totally unacceptable, says John Capel, Executive Director for the Bench Marks Foundation.

"Militarisation of security violates the letter and spirit of many South African laws, as well as the United Nations Voluntary Principles on security and human rights.

The report is the tenth edition of the Bench Marks Foundation's Policy Gap series and investigates the strengths and weaknesses in Anglo American's Kumba Iron Ore mining company's policies in its efforts to gain and maintain a Social Licence to Operate.

"During our research, community members reported that Kumba's Sishen Mine, during a strike in 2012, brought in external security. Vetus Schola, the security company, did not leave after the strike and has gone beyond their original responsibilities by taking charge of the area.

"In addition," says Capel "there are reports that Vetus Schola conducts stop-and-search operations on black workers in Kathu, which is still predominantly a 'white' town".

Researchers also found that there was a heavy presence of demobilised 32 Battalion soldiers living in Dingleton, many of whom are employed by the security company Sishen Mine utilises.

"Community members also reported that the security company has taken over police functions: they conduct raids.

"There are also reports of the security company beating people up and that although cases have been opened, nothing has come of them," says Capel.

The report says that it seems as if mining corporations continue to rely on ex-combatants for their security, which leads to the militarisation of human resource management and it strongly recommends that the South African Human Rights Commission investigate this at Sishen Mine as well as all other mines.

"We also call on parliament's security cluster to take action in terms of these concerns, which are shared by the international community, including the United Nations, as a matter of urgency".

Says Capel: "Why do mines feel the need to use such security forces? This severely impacts on their ability to earn a Social Licence to Operate, never mind the harm they do to the communities and workers. It's unacceptable and inexcusable to use forces such as this!"

There are two critical factors a company needs to look at in order to obtain a Social Licence to Operate: Free, Prior and Informed Consent and community engagement.

The report by the Bench Marks Foundation and the Bench Marks Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the North-West University highlights the gaps in the company's Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and aims to change corporate behaviour towards responsible business conduct that benefits communities and embraces the overall wellbeing of those most negatively impacted upon.

Amongst others, the Bench Marks Foundation calls for a new relationship between corporations, communities and ecosystems; equal participation of stakeholders and those most affected by the activities of corporations in the decision-making processes of companies; preservation and protection of the environment for present and future generations, and respect for the dignity of every person and human rights policies based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, or to view the last nine reports by the organisation as well as other information relating to the Kumba research, go to www.bench-marks.org.za.

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About Bench Marks Foundation:

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

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