



## Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

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### Summit a potential Farce, says Bench Marks Foundation

Johannesburg, Thursday 5 July 2018

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bench Marks Foundation has accused the Minister of Mineral Resources of ignoring structures that represent mining communities and has described this weekend's summit on the Mining Charter as a potential farce.

The organisation is widely recognised as a leading civil society organisation that gives valuable input from its in-depth research and community monitoring on the ground.

Bench Marks says that the minister is prepared to consult the Minerals Council of SA as representative of the industry, and not individual mining houses, but has failed to recognise the many civil society organisations and community formations that represent communities. These include the Bench Marks Foundation itself, BUA-Mining (a coalition of mining communities in Rustenburg), and Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA).

The organisation says that it is expecting people to be bused in for the weekend's consultation as the recent national community conference organised by MACUA show only a few have received invites.

Bench Marks Foundation asks: "Yes the minister has consulted widely but has it been with the genuine representatives of communities? We think not.

"We seriously have to question the minister of mining and his so-called consultation this weekend. Is he going to ride roughshod over legitimate community organisations? Is it arrogance or is he entrenching the exclusion of communities and of legitimate civil society organisations. By excluding legitimate community networks, on-going community struggles just to be heard will continue and grow unabated.

"Is he reinforcing a divide and rule tactic whereby traditional authorities are the preferred group to consult, going above the leaders of communities, and thus entrenching lip service to our democracy? Or is he selecting community beneficiaries of mining who do not represent communities? We have to ask these difficult questions as we too want a charter that is broadly informed by communities and civil society."

Bench Marks has called on the minister to take a step backwards and be prepared to learn about the nature of the industry from others. Especially those excluded like BUA MC and MACUA.

“Yes, he once worked as a mine worker and later on general secretary of NUM, but that is meaningless when it comes to understanding communities and the impacts they face and how mining has left a wasteland for communities. Surely he should consult more widely and more authentically?” the organisation says.

ENDS

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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