



## Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

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### **Vice Chancellor: Mines must make their environment a more sustainable place**

3 June 2015

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

All role players and stakeholders in the mining industry must make their environment a more sustainable place throughout South Africa, says Professor Dan Kgwadi, Vice Chancellor of the North West University. He was speaking during the launch of Bench Marks Foundation's latest report today.

The report by the Bench Marks Foundation and the Bench Marks Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the North-West University, entitled 'Floating or sinking' Social Licence to Operation (SLO): Kumba Iron Ore Limited, highlights the gaps in the company's Corporate Social Responsibility programmes.

It also aims to change corporate behaviour towards responsible business conduct that benefits communities and embraces the overall wellbeing of those most negatively impacted upon.

Professor Kgwadi stressed the importance of stakeholder participation - including both government and the private sector - in order to combat the huge challenges that remain in South Africa, particularly in the mining areas.

He also said that corporations must holistically and systematically look after all three main dimensions of development, namely economic issues, the natural environment and people.

"Without this," he said "sustainability will remain a pipe dream".

The professor said that he could not understand why, rich mining giants still have neighbours that, in some areas, live in the utmost poverty and are not really benefitting from the mineral richness of the country and land they live on.

He said that the report released by the Bench Marks Centre situated at the Potchefstroom Campus and the Bench Marks Foundation, brings to the fore the concepts of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within South Africa as a developmental state and further pushes the need for urgent awareness and realisation by corporations that CSR is the right thing to do.

He added that the role of civil society in development by organisations such as the Bench Marks Foundation, is essential and must continue to play a watchdog and whistle-blowing role.

"The establishment of Bench Marks Centre was formed as a collaborative relationship between the North West University and the Bench Marks Foundation and has played a central role either in research or the finalisation of research reports".

This collaboration illustrated the importance of academics playing an activist role, in a responsible and scientific way, in research that will highlight what is happening in South Africa.

"Amongst others," said Professor Kgwadi, "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".

He said the University aligned itself with this and that together, the Bench Marks Foundation and the Bench Marks Centre called for human rights policies based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be enforced.

The professor said that although Kumba Iron Ore is working on its Corporate Social Responsibility, there is definitely room for improvement especially if they wish to be sustainable and obtain and retain a Social Licence to Operate.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, or to view the ten reports by the organisation as well as other information relating to the Kumba research, go to [www.bench-marks.org.za](http://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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