



Address by Mineral Resources and Energy Director General, Advocate Thabo Mokoena at the Youth Summit held in Northern Cape, 19 – 20 November 2020

Programme Director

Local and provincial government representatives

Partners from SOEs and Private Companies

Valued Educators and Learners

Young people present to day

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Day

It is a pleasure to be here today with you all at this Youth Summit as we look at opportunities in the mining sector under what we now call the 'new normal'. As you all know, this summit takes place when the world is dealing with the devastating impacts of Covid-19. Governments across the globe find themselves having to adapt to the 'new normal' of saving and protecting lives while ensuring economic activities continue. The country's economic recovery plan allows us to emerge stronger from the fallout of COVID-19.

In order for us to ensure a strong economic recovery, it is our joint responsibility to work towards curbing the Coronavirus infection rates in our nation. To do this we simply have to observe the health protocols that we are all know so well. *Wear a mask, wash your hands or sanitise as much as you need to, and above all for the youth – maintain social distancing at all times.* The protocols may seem tedious and cumbersome for now but, observing them may mean you protect your loved one including parents and grandparents, and you live to PARTY on another day when the virus is no longer with us.

It is through strict adherence to these protocols that we have been able to minimize infections and loss of life in the mining and energy sectors so far. The sectors have adapted to the new normal by implementing measures to protect and, at the same time, explore solutions to stimulate economic recovery. We continue to work under the reality imposed by Covid-19 and the gazetted Mining Guidelines and the Energy Directives, issued to manage the spread of the virus in the sectors. All these initiatives are being implemented, as mining is a catalyst for economic growth and presents various opportunities for young people throughout the entire mining value chain, while energy remains a primary enabler for the economy.

I hope that you have taken note of the latest 3rd Presidential led South African Investment Conference that ended yesterday, and that you have noted the important role that our sectors of Energy and Mining play in the recovery of our economy. Energy is an enabler of our industrial revival and current innovations in energy policy will help to rebuild our economy as we go forward towards a least emissions economy. Meanwhile mining remains an important driver of our economy, whereby the minerals that our nation is blessed with contribute positively to the economy of our country.

I am glad that amongst us, we have young people who are still in school as education is still the cornerstone for any society. Education, training and innovation are central to our country's long-term socio-economic development. Education will not only create skilled future employees, but also create employers and innovators as South Africa faces a shortage of critical skills that are significant to drive the economy. We encourage young people to focus on Mathematics, Science and Technology in order to grow and transform the South African economy.

This is critical as we work to transform the mining sector for the benefit of all South Africans. A key instrument we are using to transform the sector is the Mining Charter, as it creates regulatory certainty, sustainable growth and a competitive and transformed mining industry. The Charter is important to South Africa realising its long-term objectives of eliminating poverty, reducing inequality, and creating jobs.

We want to see more black people participating in the sector as owners and managers of mines as well as service providers. We, in this regard, support and implement youth upliftment programmes for new entrants identified throughout the mining value chain,

as well as assist with issues of access to funding, geological information, compliance and access to markets.

We continue to reach out to young people through programmes like the Annual Learners Focus Week, where we target learners who are currently studying mathematics and science with the aim to encourage them to take up mining careers. We further provide learnerships and internships to learners and graduates as part of bridging the work experience gap needed in the employment market.

During 2019 we provided mining related bursaries to young people from this province and will continue to do so for many other learners who deserve them.

I appeal to educators to invite resident mining companies to your schools to inform learners about careers and study opportunities available through their enterprises. Our country needs more people to be skilled as mining, mechanical, electrical and chemical engineers. We are also in need of surveyors, geologists, occupational hygienists, health and safety representatives and inspectors. These are but a few of the career opportunities that are available for all young people who are determined to change not only their lives but also those of their families, communities and ultimately the whole country.

The Department continues to engage universities in order to understand what students are being taught at universities, as we seek to understand whether the knowledge transferred through our academic institutions is addresses the needs of the sector, and contribute towards ensuring that the sector remains globally competitive. Simultaneously we take note the need to consider matters including tax and investment incentives as well as infrastructure development to support local mineral beneficiation among others.

We must also look at modernization in the sector with a view to increase safety and efficiency as well as productivity. Young people must also work with us as we find ways on how the country can be responsive to the changing demands of minerals, technology advances and innovation in production and exploration as the world moves towards the 4th industrial revolution.

As you return home, I urge you not to forget what you learnt at this summit, I further plead with you to share the information you received with your friends and families when you get home as we could not bring them all here.

I thank you