MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE

MINISTER OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

MR GWEDE MANTASHE

COUNCIL FOR GEOSCIENCE SUMMIT,

DURBAN ICC,

25 OCTOBER 2022

Programme Director,

Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Dr Nobuhle Nkabane

Honourable Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Mineral Resources and Energy, Mr Sahlulele Luzipho

Host Mayor of Ethekwini, Councillor Mxolisi Kaunda

Chairperson of the Council for Geoscience Board, Dr Humphrey Mathe and team CGS

Director General, Mr Jacob Mbele and team DMRE

Heads of Geoscience Schools at South African Universities,

Vice President of the Organisation of African Geological Surveys, Mr Ceasar Jules

Head of the Federal Agency for Mineral Resources of the Russian Federation, Dr Evgeli Petrov

Traditional Leaders here present

Members of the media

Esteemed delegates

It is a very proud moment to bear witness and partake in the celebration of 110 years since the formation of the Council for Geoscience (CGS). The entity has come a long way since its humble beginnings in 1912 as the Geological Survey of the country.

Coincidentally, the year of 1912 also marks the birth of the governing party, the African National Congress. The two organisations lived through the same history of the country but perhaps at different extremes of the spectrum.

The establishment of the CGS came shortly after the Union of South Africa was formed. It was no coincidence that the CGS, as microcosm of society, found itself entangled as a repository of privilege for the minority. The dawn of a constitutional democratic dispensation brought about hope for a truly democratic, non-sexist, and non-racial environment in which the current shape and form of the CGS has found expression.

As we convene to celebrate the historical and current contribution of the geosciences to human development, we also consider the next 110 years of even greater scientific contribution.

Increasingly, science evidence has become the cornerstone of policy formulation for the country, the African continent, and the world.

Our nation is faced with challenges which require a more pre-eminent role of the geosciences to find expression in addressing these societal challenges. These challenges include, albeit not limited to energy security, just energy

transition, sustainable food supply, economic growth, climate change challenge, disaster management that arises from natural phenomenon such as floods and earthquakes.

You may recall that the host province of Kwa-Zulu Natal recently experienced the most devastating disaster that demolished houses and infrastructure. It has never been more important for any infrastructure development to consider geo-technical conditions appropriately prior to effecting such development.

It is precisely in this context that the amendment of the Geoscience Act empowered the CGS to review all geo-technical reports and provide appropriate advice to the local authorities in consideration of their infrastructure development programmes. I call upon our municipalities to imbue this notion in their by-laws to augment their service delivery programmes to the satisfaction of the people they serve.

The Geoscience Act also empowered the CGS to undertake exploration. I am expecting them to work with the private sector to re-catalyse the exploration activities in the country, in line with the geological potential. As the world's economic trajectory demands new suite of minerals deemed to be critical minerals for lower carbon

footprint, there had never been a better time for the geoscience communities to work together and prepare to unravel the possibilities of South Africa as a source of these minerals, advanced in the manner that optimizes the benefit for the people of the country.

The lead role of the CGS in the Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) gives us hope that our Just Energy Transition programme can be attained with one of our most valuable commodity that has provided base load for the country. Our commitment to the international protocol on climate change remains resolute. Our transition from high to low carbon emissions might be achieved with coal as part of the solution, if the hypothesis of clean coal is proven.

We have allocated an additional R500 million to the CGS in the current cycle of MTEF to accelerate geo-mapping in support for exploration. I encourage collaboration with academia and private sector to unleash the true potential of the country.

Earlier this year, we published the Geoscience Act Regulations to enable the CGS as a true custodian and repository of the geoscientific data and information, the heritage of the country. The CGS must give confidence to the generators of this data and information that it is managed professionally and with the sensitivity it deserves. They have assured me that they have

developed systems, processes, and procedures to effect this responsibility with distinction.

South Africa has been a mining for over 150 years, during which time a lot of geoscientific information had been collected. This information, which was collected by some companies that have since departed our shores, is not readily available to the State. I have confidence that you will rise to the national call of duty.

I am informed that the Russian delegation of geoscientists is here to not only celebrate with us, but to also foster strategic partnership on both bilateral basis as well as exploration of multi-lateralism. I am also informed that the members of academia, the private sector, Geological Society of South Africa, the Chinese representation as well as the Organisation of African Geological Surveys are here. This demonstrates the importance of strategic partnerships in fostering the coalescence of the willing, as you individually and jointly seek to accelerate the significance of geosciences in finding lasting solutions.

Whilst, we have made environmental preservation a Constitutional prerogative, our attempt to achieve this objective ought not be executed at the expense of development. There's no reason why conservation and development cannot be mutually reinforcing, as the two are not binary in character. As the members of the geoscientific

community, I implore you to design your programmes in a manner that will advance the notion of co-existence between these two.

As we seek all manner of sources of sustainable energy sources, such sources as geothermal must be considered in South Africa. The preliminary research undertaken by the CGS illuminates this prospect, albeit at early stages. Every effort must be put into confirming the prospects, so that we can enrich our energy basket.

The use of seismic survey as an instrument of research is well developed as a geoscientific instrument, spanning both terrestrial and marine applications. It would appear that the South African citizenry is oblivious to this knowledge as a result of which, there are critical decisions that are taken within the country that delay possibilities of allowing us to explore and develop the hydrocarbon prospects in our shores. It is incumbent upon the geoscientific community to educate members of society about this hidden treasure of the nation, the geoscientific prowess.

Ladies and gentlemen, an occasion of this nature requires us to blow our own horn a little bit. Not many institutions live to tell of 110 years of existence and still maintain their relevance. The CGS was relevant in 1912 and has become

even more relevant today. In recent years, personnel of the CGS have contributed extensively to the development of South Africa, the African continent and internationally.

Internationally, this contribution has been through their involvement in international mapping projects in a number of African countries, Haiti and the United Arab Emirates, amongst others.

On the continent, the CGS continues to actively participate in a variety of Southern African Development Community projects aimed at promoting the economic development of the African subcontinent. In this regard, the organisation has contributed significantly in the development of geoscience knowledge on the continent. Accordingly, it was instrumental in the founding, and still plays an active role in the activities of, the Organisation of African Geological Surveys.

As we look onto the future, it is envisaged that the CGS will play a key role in providing geoscientific solutions to several challenges facing our country and the continent.

It is expected that the CGS will play a technical role in addressing the urgent problems of water ingress and Acid Mine Drainage that we have inherited because of historical unsustainable mining practices. Moreover, there are

challenges of water scarcity in many parts of the country which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The problem of illegal mining has engulfed the country. We have been consistent that this is a crime and there can be no room for such activity is South Africa. Accordingly, I appreciate the responsiveness of the CGS in speedily developing illegal mining tracker © technique using geoscientific techniques, which will detect illegal mining activities well in advance and communicated with the law enforcement authorities to deal with such activities timely.

The CGS is actively involved in assessing the negative impacts of the mining industry as well as other human activities on our water resources. This is achieved by conducting episodic and continuous monitoring and by providing support and recommendations to institutions and other government departments. Furthermore, the CGS is actively involved in water-related research and the development of local skilled manpower in collaboration with several institutions including the Water Research Commission, the CSIR, the Department of Water Affairs, the Department of Science and Innovation, the Housing Development Agency, Sanral, and the South African National Research Foundation.

The government's multibillion infrastructure build programme will require CGS and the geo-technical community to play an acute role in safe-guarding the integrity of critical infrastructure investment.

It is essential that infrastructural development be accompanied by sound geotechnical investigations and information. As the national mandated authority in respect of geo-hazards related to infrastructure development, the CGS should in future ensure safe development on hazardous ground, by verifying that all necessary steps of the appropriate geotechnical investigations are performed prior to any housing and infrastructure development.

I am proud to note that the CGS is already undertaking work in this area of geotechnical investigation reports on potentially unstable dolomitic areas identified for the construction of RDP houses and will be expected to participate in government's infrastructural development programme.

As we modernise geological mapping, a greater need for rapid collection, interpretation, and integration of mapping data as well as the dissemination of the products to clients and stakeholders in digital formats accessible via the internet, has never been more pronounced. The rapid collection of comprehensive data will also facilitate a more

pro-active approach to planning and development. The CGS is indeed integral to government planning and this needs to be elevated as we move to reposition this organisation. We have taken a deliberate decision to resource the CGS to embed applications of artificial intelligence in the context of the fourth industrial revolution. Training of 30 drone pilots is indeed applauded and positioned the CGS along the development trajectory sought to optimize partnerships and impact on its mandatory deliverables.

Whilst it is safe to assume that this centennial year of the CGS will usher in changes to many aspects of the organisation, clearly the future success of the CGS will depend on how successfully it provides solutions to the changing needs of the community it serves. However, I have confidence that the CGS will gain strength in its journey as it continues to build on past successes and adapts itself to the ever-changing global landscape of the earth sciences. As a science institution, the organisation can only increase its success by expanding its partnerships in the geoscientific environment.

Let me conclude by congratulating the staff of the CGS on 110 years of proud achievements as well as the broader geoscientific community. May the next 110 years be better,

and may you contribute greatly to the well-being of South Africa and its people.

I thank you.