



**MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE  
MINISTER OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY  
MR GWEDE MANTASHE**

**MINE HEALTH AND SAFETY TRIPARTITE SUMMIT  
13 OCTOBER 2022**

Programme Director

Honourable Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phahla

Honourable Minister of Employment and Labour, Mr Thulas Nxesi

Honourable Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Dr Nobuhle Nkabane

Leadership of organised business

Leadership of organised labour – the NUM, AMCU, UASA and Solidarity

Professional Associations – AMMSA, SACMA and SAIMM

Equipment Supplier Representatives

Representatives of MHSC and MQA

Team DMRE

Members of the media

This 2022 Tripartite Summit is aimed at identifying and resolving the bottlenecks.

The summit provides us all a platform to engage and find solutions for successful improvement of our occupational health and safety performance.

Employers and labour should be explicit about their respective roles and programs for the provision and maintenance of a safe working environment, free of risk.

Government's premise is that fatalities in the workplace are unacceptable and must be stopped. The industry must quantify its success through investment in the number of workers who retire in good health and looking forward to sharing the remainder of their lives with their loved ones. In turn, through their service in the mining industry, sustainable livelihoods and a positive human development would be realised.

With over 150 years, mining is still a critical pillar of our economy. It contributes significantly to our export earnings, is a source of foreign direct investment, and a direct employer of nearly half a million people.

As highlighted in our Budget Vote this year, we expect the industry to grow and contribute significantly to our economy, moving from the current over 8% share of GDP to over 12%.

This is possible when we work together, starting with exploration where we set a medium-term target of attracting at least 5% of the total global exploration budget, currently estimated at over 18 billion US dollars.

However, this target should be appropriately evaluated against the prevailing global challenges. Reality is that current pressures affecting the industrialised world pose significant threats to

global recovery, especially growth in developing economies like ours.

In this uncertain economic and post-Covid-19 global environment, we should foreground our advance on the partnership we developed at the height of the pandemic. We demonstrated our collective capacity to support our national development agenda by working together on the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. We showed our capabilities through an effective and efficient management of the pandemic by delivering on the vaccination of workers and mining communities.

We must continue to work together in accelerating the recovery of our economy, by implementing identified reforms, to create sustainable jobs and by ensuring inclusive growth.

## **MINE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The latest statistics and reports on occupational health and safety statistics show that employees are exposed to hazards that exceed the occupational exposure limit. This should concern us.

Progress has been made in reported occupational diseases, with a drop from two thousand and thirteen (2013) in 2020 to one thousand nine hundred and twenty-four (1924) cases in 2021. Much of the progress is attributable to the manganese, iron, chrome, coal, diamond, copper, and platinum sectors.

There was also a decrease in silicosis, Pulmonary TB (PTB), Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis (CWP) and other diseases.

Unfortunately, the gold sector regressed, showing an overall increase in the total number of occupational diseases reported.

It is worth noting that non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes exacerbate the burden of disease in the industry.

Therefore, we should make concerted effort in the prevention and management of health matters because they impact the average work life expectancy of the workforce. As a result, crucial resources are lost due to medical incapacitation and mine deaths.

There is minimal progress in reducing accidents and fatalities. Total fatal accidents dropped from thirty-eight (38) in 2021 to thirty (30) in 2022. Actual fatalities decreased from thirty-eight

(38) in 2021 to thirty-seven (37) in 2022. As we always emphasise, one death is one too many. Ours is a zero-harm target.

We note those incidents and cases still categorised as miscellaneous, suggesting impending investigation. Our teams must act with speed in attending to investigating accidents and dealing with post-mortems processes. These processes, while necessary in determining the underlying causes of death, are of absolute importance to bring closure for bereaved families.

The most significant progress thus far is in the reduction of deaths from fall of ground (FOG) accidents. This dropped from fifteen (15) in 2021 to three (3) in 2022. The gold and platinum sectors must be commended for this remarkable improvement. You cannot drop but improve the standard you have now set.

We wish to also recognise the 67% reduction in machinery related fatalities.

We must, however, pay considerable on transportation as it shows to be an emerging source of occupational fatalities.

Further, actual injuries thus far reported have decreased by at least twelve percent (12%), and thirty two percent (32%) reduction in the gold sector.

Safety of women employees is paramount. Women must feel and be safe in the workplace and everywhere.

Every one of us, in every sector of our industry, Owner, Chief Executive Officer, Mine Manager, Shift Boss, Shaft Sinker, Winch Driver, Miner, Driller, Sweeper and Ordinary worker, should abide by the code, if you love her you care for her.

We need to also address all risks associated with exploitation of mine pillars and residue deposits/tailings dams.

The burst of the tailings dam in Jagersfontein is a reminder of the dangers posed to the lives of mining communities by operations that fall outside the Mine Health and Safety Inspectorate. It is a painful lesson on the harm of mine legacy projects, which we must be alert and sensitive to always. To the employers, it may be that you can exploit loopholes in the regulations by winning cases against the Department where you wish not to be held accountable. Nevertheless, in the court of public opinion, inside the affected communities, you are forever guilty.

Once more, it is incumbent upon the industry - especially mine owners and bosses, to work tirelessly to gain trust of the communities. Social license is earned through acts of care and caring for the men and women who convert your investment into wealth. Health and safety are an essential ingredient of trust and social license.

Collaboration and the spirit of genuine tripartism should be our anchor going forward. This is central to change and demands commitment from all partners. Critically, maintain and strengthen relationships at the mine level to ensure that the vision amongst stakeholder representatives is closely aligned. Strengthen dedicated team that can do regular monitoring of workplaces. Employers are encouraged to work with organised labour to improve knowledge and skills of workers so they can exercise their rights to withdraw or refuse to work under dangerous conditions.

Occupational health and safety will find practical expression when we make it part of our daily work routines.

In actioning all these steps we need to have more platforms to share good experiences and develop programmes for the benefit of this industry.

We must also continue to explore and to develop mechanisms to deal with those aspects that affect our industry negatively, like illegal mining, cable theft, and damage to infrastructure, among others. Every one of us have vested interest in the success of our industry. Therefore, we should cooperate with, and alert law enforcement and security agencies where we have information. Indeed, do so with caution to avoid unnecessary harm.

The Department will continue embarking on interventions which include among others the following:

- Engaging Union Leadership, CEOs and Boards of Directors of different mining houses to enhance the concerted efforts in the eradication of mine deaths.
- Continue with the stakeholder collaborations in implementing the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) and Mining Qualification Authority (MQA) programmes.
- Enforcing and monitoring of health and safety at mines through focused inspections and audits to be escalated including during the remaining period of 2022 and beyond.
- Ensure that safe technologies and mining practices are adopted given that a significant number of accidents occurred whilst opening or mining in old areas.
- Ensure that all mines collaborate with inspectors and organized labour to have health and safety days and

campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of adhering to health and safety protocols.

As we approach the festive season, I urge you all to take the necessary precautions and to refrain from dangerous working conditions.

Shift fatigue management systems must be implemented and be continuously monitored.

In conclusion, I extend my condolences, and those of Team DMRE as a whole, to the families of all the workers who lost their lives. We also wish speedy recovery to injured mineworkers.

**I thank you.**