



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

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE
MINISTER OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY**

MR GWEDE MANTASHE

AFRICAN CRITICAL MINERALS SUMMIT

SANDTON CC, JOHANNESBURG

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President of the Mineral Council South Africa, Ms Nolitha Fakude

Captains of Industries

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

It is with a great sense of honour and privilege that I welcome you to the inaugural African Critical Minerals Summit convened on African soil.

Your participation in the summit, which comes a few days after the BRICS Summit, proves your commitment to collaborative efforts aimed at developing the African continent through its enormous mineral resource endowment.

At the centre of our two-day summit discussions is the development of a shared vision for the critical minerals with which our continent is blessed, and our aim is to foster regional cooperation and economic growth.

Whereas there is no universal definition of “**critical minerals**”, several countries have interchangeably used and defined “**critical, strategic or future minerals**” according to their importance in: economic growth and industrialisation; technological advancements; energy transition; geopolitical considerations; supply chain vulnerabilities; environmental and social concerns; and strategic importance.

Allow me to take this opportunity to draw your attention to some of the existing definitions of *critical minerals*.

In its critical minerals strategy, the **United Kingdom (UK)** defined critical minerals as “Minerals with high economic vulnerability and high global supply risk”.

The **United States of America (USA)**, in its Energy Act of 2020, defines a critical mineral “as a non-fuel mineral or mineral material essential to the economic or national security of the U.S. and which has a supply chain vulnerable to disruption”.

Australia, in its critical minerals strategy, defined critical minerals as “minerals that are essential for the energy, transport, aerospace, defence, medical, automotive and telecommunications sectors which will also be used to further advance manufacturing applications”.

Lastly, **Canada**, in its critical mineral strategy, defines a critical mineral as a “mineral that must be essential to Canada’s economic security and its supply is threatened; or required for its national transition to a low-carbon economy; or a sustainable source of highly strategic critical minerals for its partners and allies”.

While these definitions vary depending on each country's needs, each of these nations list various mineral resources that they deem critical based on their resource endowment, supply chain vulnerabilities, and specific economic and technological priorities.

Our argument, as South Africa, is that the criticalness of a mineral does not depend on who is using it, hence, we submit to this summit that **critical minerals cannot be defined in terms of those who use them and those who have them**. Even though critical minerals may be used per country, they cannot be defined per country.

This summit, therefore, affords us a unique opportunity not only to define critical minerals, but also to develop a clear roadmap on how to maximise the exploitation and monetisation of these resources for value addition to our economies.

The fact of the matter is that Africa holds enormous reserves of minerals such as **platinum, manganese, vanadium, nickel, copper, cobalt, lithium, graphite, titanium, rhodium, and other rare earth minerals**. All these minerals are listed in the various minerals that are deemed critical.

The manner in which Africa defines and list critical minerals is vital because it will have significant implications for our strategic planning, prioritisation, and investment

decision-making. Therefore, **our approach to defining critical minerals** must be holistic, with consideration of our national and continental needs, and global trends.

If we were to use the USA's characterisation of critical minerals as 'serving an essential function in the manufacturing of a product, the absence of which would have significant consequences for the economy or national security", one can therefore argue that **coal** can equally be deemed a critical mineral for the generation of baseload energy to ensure security of energy supply and eliminate energy poverty on the African continent. We submit that the absence of coal in the diversified energy mix will equally have significant consequences for our economies, and thus coal ought to be classified as a critical mineral.

On the same note, another critical mineral that does not find prominent expression in the lists of critical minerals is **uranium**, which can be used in various nuclear applications such as the generation of clean baseload energy, and nuclear research reactors for medical purposes.

There is global acceptance that **nuclear, and gas** will play a critical role as clean energy technologies in the just energy transition from high carbon emissions to low carbon emissions. It is therefore our submission that uranium, which Africa is endowed with, is a critical mineral for the development of clean energy and medicine.

The crux of the matter is that **there can be no green future without Africa's minerals**. For instance, between South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), you will get all these critical minerals.

We must therefore insist on the **creation of value in countries of origin** to change the status quo on the African continent. It is in the best interests of Africa to develop a **new mining order** directed at **ensuring that these minerals are benefited at source or locally** to stimulate economic growth, industrialise our economies, and improve the trade balance of our continent.

However, we need to be frank in our discussions. This means, we must honestly engage with the notion of local beneficiation of critical minerals, and collectively answer the following questions: **Who will do the beneficiation? Are we ready for such beneficiation?** We must use this summit to craft solutions to our challenges,

including the extraction of these minerals from rocks, for which Mintek can be of assistance given its existing capabilities.

For its part, South Africa is at an advanced stage of developing its critical minerals strategy, which will help us industrialise and support our just energy transition to a low-carbon future.

We, however, submit to this summit that Africa needs to develop its own critical minerals strategy to ensure that it does not repeat the mistakes of the past, as it was done with the pit-to-port approach to mining traditional minerals.

We further submit that Africa must unite and collectively develop and uphold its industrialisation strategy rooted in the utilisation of its mineral resource endowment to transform African economies, eradicate poverty, and underpin Africa's sustainable growth and development.

We hope and believe this platform will take us a step closer to a continental agreement and recommit to the ***African Mining Vision*** of a “transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development”.

In conclusion, I trust that we will effectively use this summit to foster a continental agreement on these minerals, encourage and deepen intra-Africa trade, position Africa as an investment destination and the leading producer of critical minerals, and subsequently propel African economies towards inclusive and accelerated growth.

Success in this regard will, however, be seen in what we do as a continent moving forward.

I thank you.