

MEDIA STATEMENT

MINERALS COUNCIL NOTES PUBLICATION OF 2019 HEALTH AND SAFETY STATISTICS *Industry reaffirms commitment to Zero Harm*

Johannesburg, 24 January 2020: The Minerals Council South Africa and senior representatives from member companies today attended the official announcement by Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe of the 2019 industry health and safety performance statistics.

The Minerals Council acknowledges the shared journey travelled by industry tripartite partners – government, unions and employees, and companies – to improve health and safety in the mining industry. While recognising the significant strides made, the Minerals Council and the industry feel very deeply the passing of those colleagues who have lost their lives at work, and reaffirm the industry’s commitment to Zero Harm.

Reflecting on safety performance in 2019, the Minerals Council notes the significant reduction in multiple fatality events, which was a major concern in 2017 and 2018. Since 1993, the industry has experienced a more than 92% decline in the number of fatalities from 615 to 51 in 2019 with a year-on-year improvement of 37% compared to 2018.

The industry’s performance in the latter part of 2017 and the first half of 2018 was indeed a challenging period, when the industry experienced an increase in fatalities for the first time in a decade. This was unacceptable to the industry, prompting the Minerals Council Board, through the CEO Zero Harm Forum, to initiate a number of measures to holistically address health and safety.

The forum closely scrutinised the major causes of accidents, prioritised the sharing of good practice, and endorsed additional research, some of it in collaboration with the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC).



In January 2019, the CEO Zero Harm Forum held a seminal event (known as CEO Heartfelt Conversations) which facilitated meaningful engagement amongst mining CEOs, and more senior industry representatives, on health and safety-related issues. These Heartfelt Conversations examined a number of crucial concerns, particularly in respect of visible leadership.

A direct outcome of the event was the establishment of a CEO-led strategy on health and safety, namely, Khumbul'ekhaya, which means "remember home". This strategy has placed at the forefront the elimination of fatalities as a priority, and to ensure that health and safety are addressed equally, while people are at work and beyond.

The industry-wide Health and Safety Days hosted by Minerals Council members across the mining industry continued in 2018 and 2019 contributed to greater visibility of health and safety among all stakeholders, and a greater sense of collective responsibility. The Minerals Council believes that by ensuring that health and safety are at the forefront of all activities, these initiatives have contributed towards the improvement the industry experienced during the latter part of 2018 and in 2019.

Reflecting further on the performance statistics published today, the Minerals Council notes that the reduction of the number of injuries must be a key focus area for all industry stakeholders. A further critical concern is the increase in the number of fatalities and injuries among female miners, which must receive the collective attention of all tripartite partners in developing initiatives to protect women in mining.

The Minerals Council also welcomed the significant improvements in disease incidence rates. There is a lag in the reporting of health-related performance, and so the statistics presented are for 2018. In the decade to 2018, the key disease rates for the mining sector - which include silicosis, TB and noise-induced hearing loss - improved by 74%, 63% and 56% respectively. These improvements, too, can be attributed to the collaborative and collective efforts of individual companies, Minerals Council programmes, the efforts of unions, government and tripartite initiatives led by the MHSC.

The improvement in counselling for HIV to 83% and screening for TB to 90%, better than the national average, are encouraging. The Minerals Council remain committed to reach industry targets and achieving this goal will be greatly assisted by the Masoyise Health Programme, which is a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at reducing TB, HIV, occupational lung diseases and non-communicable diseases.

Roger Baxter, CEO of the Minerals Council notes: “The path to Zero Harm was never going to be an easy or simple one. And we have experienced setbacks. While the industry’s safety and health performance during 2019 is a significant progress on what we have been able to achieve in the past, we recognise that our journey is far from over.

“We remain committed to continuing to work with our social partners on all matters of health and safety. We – and I speak for every mining company CEO – remain resolute in our determination to work collaboratively to achieve our goal of Zero Harm.”

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