

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

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### **CONGRATULATIONS TO AFRICAN RAINBOW MINERALS AND ASSORE FOR THE OUTSTANDING SAFETY PERFORMANCE OF BLACK ROCK MINE OPERATIONS**

**Johannesburg, 6 April.** The safety performance of Assmang's Black Rock Mine Operations is nothing short of remarkable and deserving of the highest praise and accolades. It has achieved 13 years and 10 million shifts without a fatality.

For the South African mining industry, which is grappling with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their operations, and a regression in overall safety performance, Black Rock stands out as a beacon of hope for the sector to aspire to and emulate.

Black Rock, which is jointly owned by African Rainbow Minerals and Assore, both Minerals Council members, has proved underground mining can be done safely and with zero harm as this mining complex near Hotazel in the Northern Cape has shown, with its staffing complement of 6,000 employees, of which 1,600 are contractors.

What makes the safety performance all the more remarkable is that it was achieved during a decade-long modernisation and refurbishment programme at the Gloria and Nchwaning mines and processing plants, which demanded the highest levels of change management. And during this period, the industry experienced the severe disruptions caused by the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

A performance like this can only be achieved by an unwavering focus by management, organised labour, and employees on safety, adhering to company safety protocols, training, and initiatives. The work done by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy's mines inspectorate must also be acknowledged. They all deserve the highest congratulations and praise for working as a team to reach this milestone.

Black Rock is living the zero-harm performance we are striving to make possible for Minerals Council member companies through our dedicated safety work, peer learning, and engagements.



At a special board meeting in December last year, eight interventions were agreed to address the industry's unacceptable safety performance. In 2021, the industry reported 74 fatalities, up from 60 in 2020 and 51 the year before.

The first measure is an increased visible leadership at mining operations, showing that safety starts at the very top. Safety is the responsibility of all of us, not just those working in dangerous environments. Safety is not only to be practiced at our mining operations but outside the gates too, as we make our way home, and with our families and friends. It's a lifestyle choice, a mindset. Hence the Minerals Council's Khumbul'ekhaya (Nguni word for remember home) strategy on health and safety and the tripartite milestone goal is to ensure every worker returns from work unharmed every day.

Our special board meeting was held shortly after all industry stakeholders including suppliers held the MineSafe 2021 conference in November. At this conference, Black Rock's outstanding safety performance record was recognised among its peers in safety performance and was selected by the Industry Safety Award Adjudicating Committee (comprising Professional Associations, Association of Mine Managers of South Africa and South African Collieries Managers Association) as the winner of the "Best in Class in Other Commodities" category.

To achieve a step change towards transforming health and safety in the mining sector, and realising our goal of zero harm, stakeholders from the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, the Minerals Council South Africa, organised labour, suppliers' organisations, professional associations, the Mine Health and Safety Council and Mining Qualifications Authority committed to taking full accountability in addressing the challenges besetting the mining sector.

One of the actions was to ensure the industry promotes Covid-19 vaccinations to support the physical and mental health of employees and reduce disruptions to mining operations. I am pleased to say that the mining industry has fully and partially vaccinated more than 75% of its employees, one of the leading performances in the private sector. We have set ourselves the target of 80% and we are getting there.

The Minerals Council and its partner, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, at the Mandela Mining Precinct are working hard on modernising our industry to make it possible to mine with zero harm to our employees.

The Minerals Council has embarked on a five-year, R46 million investment into the implementation of a Fall of Ground action plan that we launched at our National Day of Health and Safety in Mining in July last year. We have held a day of learning on how our members

are addressing falls of ground, a leading source of fatalities. We are resolved to remove this risk from underground mining. See: <https://www.mineralscouncil.org.za/industry-news/media-releases/2022/send/85-2022/1864-fall-of-ground-media-statement-31-march-2022>

Another major area of work for the Minerals Council is the implementation of a holistic, risk-phased plan for collision-prevention systems with ecosystem readiness for industry-wide adoption by December 2023. This will help address fatalities arising from mobile machinery.

African Rainbow Minerals and Assore are actively represented in the Minerals Council health and safety committees, and we look forward to learning from Black Rock's success story for the improvement of safety in the mining industry.

**For further queries:**

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