

**ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE SUSAN SHABANGU, MINISTER OF MINERAL
RESOURCES
AT
THE MINING AND GENDER FORUM, 25 OCTOBER 2013**

His Excellency, Australia's High Commissioner, Mr Graeme Wilson

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Programme Director

Honoured guests

Ladies and gentlemen

I am greatly honoured to be part of this important occasion devoted to discussions on gender issues in the mining industry. I would like to applaud the Australian government and Australian AID for the commitment they have shown in hosting these study tours, aimed at sharing and exchanging mining and development experiences. This initiative reaffirms the two countries' commitment to working together to encourage diversity in mining.

Last year we gathered here in South Africa for the Women in Mining Forum. It is only fitting that a year later we are back, at this Mining and Gender Forum to see where we have made progress, and what opportunities as well as challenges exist in this sector, to advance gender equity and equality.

It is important to state at the outset that the Government of South Africa remains committed to the eradication of gender discrimination in our society. We have worked hard to ensure inclusive participation of men and women in economic activities of this country, and it is imperative that we continue to advance gender mainstreaming, to further promote a competitive and transformed economy.

Through the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) we have created a predictable mining regulatory framework that is consistent with global best practice, and attuned to the dynamic socio-economic and political landscape of our country.

The MPRDA was given further impetus by the Mining Charter of 2004, whose key objective was to accelerate the transformation agenda in the mining industry.

The latest review of the Charter indicates that the industry still has to make strides in meeting the stipulated targets, especially on matters relating to employment equity. Our policies are very clear in terms of inclusion of women in the mining sector, and it has only been in the recent past that we have begun to see meaningful participation of women in this particular sector. Looking back over the last five years, there has been a steady increase in the number of women employed in the mining industry. Only twenty four thousand six hundred and fifty nine (24 659) women were employed in 2007, compared to forty eight thousand four hundred and twenty (48 420) women in 2012.

South Africa's mining industry remains one of the country's key tradable sectors, with potential for meaningful contribution to economic prosperity, job creation and transformation, consistent with Government's objectives as outlined in the National Development Plan. This sector has transformed South Africa into one of the most industrialised countries on the continent, and contributes significantly to the country's GDP. And yet as a result of past socioeconomic discriminatory practices, women in this industry are still marginalised. This practice is not exclusive to South Africa, but is seen in the mining industry globally.

Any country's competitiveness depends on its human capital - the skills, education and productivity of its workforce. Women make up half of the country's potential talent base, thus widening the pool of available resources. The mining industry also needs to have a clear approach to diversity of the workforce, by creating a working environment that promotes a culture where differences between men and women are acknowledged and harnessed for a positive outcome.

A recent PwC (UK) Report on "Mining for Talent", clearly demonstrates that gender diversity has a positive impact on the financial and social success of mining companies. Some of its findings indicate that, of the top 500 globally listed mining companies:

- the top 100 have more women on their boards;
- the top 101 to 500 have more women in senior executive positions;
- The larger the market capitalisation of the company, the more likely there is to be a woman on the board; and

- There are more women in senior executive positions in South African listed mining companies (JSE), with London having the least.

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN THE MINING SECTOR

Working underground has been one of the biggest challenges for women, with insufficient, and in some cases, no facilities dedicated to them. This is in spite of the Mine Health and Safety Act, which requires employers to provide healthy and safe working conditions for all employees. As a Department we will be working to ensure better enforcement of our laws, and dealing decisively with those who continue to disregard them. We will soon be gazetting amendments to this Act, to deal with, among other things, the safety and security of women working underground.

Anecdotal information on female mineworkers indicates that the following factors need to be taken into consideration:

- the influence of physiological factors on safety
- Insufficient welfare facilities dedicated to women
- The impact of shift work on health and family life
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is generally designed for the male physique
- Resistance by male colleagues to accept women in their ranks.

These are matters which require urgent attention and investigation if we are to successfully deal with gender challenges in the sector.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASED PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN THE SECTOR

Given the vast opportunities provided by our policies, particularly the Mining Charter, women must strive to enter the mining industry in more meaningful roles - either as owners or mining professionals, in leadership and management roles.

This participation of women in the sector must be premised on the appropriate skills needed to contribute to the growth of this industry. In this regard, we have collaborated with our social

partners through the Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA) to improve skills development initiatives, and to increase the participation of women at all levels of the mining sector.

I was recently invited to address a group of aspiring young science and engineering students at one of our prestigious institutions of higher learning, and I am thrilled to say the majority of them were female – this gives me confidence in the effectiveness of our transformation policies. Young women are now exposed to career opportunities within mining and exploration and nowadays they consider mining as a career of choice, which augurs well for the future of this industry.

In conclusion, I would like to implore captains of this industry to reaffirm their commitment to inclusiveness and equality, and strive towards the creation of an environment where both men and women are equally valued.

I sincerely hope that the engagements in this forum will assist all of us in developing interventions to address the challenges posed by gender inequalities in the industry, and also facilitate the creation of an industry with a workforce that better represents our respective countries' demographics.

I thank you.