



MEDIA STATEMENT BY BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION

CSR – The truth!

Tuesday, 14th June 2011

Questions and experiences around how corporate social responsibility impacts on communities socially, economically and environmentally were addressed at the Bench Marks Foundation's public AGM meeting on 14 June 2011.

Themed *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – 'the Truth'*, the meeting which will be held at Cedar Park Conference Centre, will focus on social responsibility within the framework of sustainable development.

"We are very dedicated to our work which involves critically engaging corporations around corporate social responsibility and raising public awareness on this subject," said John Capel, CEO of The Bench Marks Foundation.

"Amongst those we have invited to this event, are mining houses, business representatives, government, trade unions, churches, civil society, embassies and various communities."

Capel said that it is extremely important to create the space for dialogue around this subject to occur. Communities and other stakeholders will be given the opportunity to interact with one another. The Bench Marks Foundation will also concentrate on the reason why CSR means different things to different people and the various interpretations of the word by the diverse sectors.

"For corporations, CSR means to be seen to be doing well in society, as long as it does not affect their bottom line. The agenda of CSR is riddled with complexities, systemic and structural limitations and the question is how do we get corporations to go beyond these limitations and operate responsibly. How do we get everyone singing off the same song sheet, as it were?" he added.

According to Rt. Rev Dr Jo Seoka, Chairperson of The Bench Marks Foundation, the world faces a crisis of mass unemployment, rising poverty and mass social exclusion with a steadily warming planet that will make life impossible for people, agriculture, food, and social structure.

"Despite this, we have corporations and CEOs who are still not heeding the call for responsible social sustainability and economic empowerment and who are making millions upon millions a year," he said.

The Foundation will also use this meeting to reveal how it aims to continue raising the bar with regard to what represents good CSR practices, and will look back at the achievements the organisation has had over the past five years in holding corporations accountable.

The Bench Marks Foundation was launched in 2001 by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in response to the churches' call in 1993 to monitor and hold businesses accountable in the new South Africa and in Southern Africa. It is chaired by Bishop Jo Seoka.

For more information on the meeting contact Simo Gumede from The Bench Marks Foundation at 011 832 1742/3 or email simo@bench-marks.org.za

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Bench Marks Foundation is an independent organisation monitoring corporate performance in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with the focus on social sustainability and economic empowerment. The organisation encourages CSR that goes beyond reporting mechanisms and focuses on the gap between policy and practice, thereby assisting civil society groups and corporations to move beyond philanthropy to more strategic interventions that benefit both the corporations and society. Central to Bench Marks' agenda is how CSR is integrated into companies' operations and ensuring that it is at the core of every decision making process.

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