

Bench Marks Foundation supports environmental legislation

10 November 2008

The Bench Marks Foundation has welcomed two developments that concerning environmental practices relating to mining in South Africa. These are the proposed Renewable Energy Bill and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)'s study on Anglo Platinum's operations in Limpopo.

The Renewable Energy Bill, which is yet to be tabled in Parliament, is a conception of a group of cross party Members of Parliament who formed a lobby group that seeks to bring about change in South Africa's renewable energy sector.

" The Renewable Energy Bill is a step in the right direction for the country and as Bench Marks Foundation we fully support this environmentally friendly and job creating piece of legislation," said John Capel, Bench Marks Foundation Chief Executive Officer.

According to reports, South Africa is the most intense Carbon polluter after China and if enacted, this legislation will contribute to South Africa's target of reversing its carbon emissions by 2020-2025.

It is hoped that the Bill will be tabled before Parliament prorogues ahead of next year's election.

Meanwhile the Bench Marks Foundation also hailed the findings by the SAHRC with regards to the impact of Anglo Platinum's Potgietersrust operations near Mokopane. These findings reflect the Foundation's findings in both 'Policy Gap 1 and Policy Gap 2'.

An investigation by the SAHRC into the relocation of the communities had 'adversely' affected the communities.

"Anglo Platinum is right in noting that legislative shortcomings in mining legislation pose a problem. However, this should not prevent Anglo from performing above the standards set by the law in terms of environmental, social and economic impacts on communities surrounding Anglo operations," said Capel.

In its Policy Gap 2 study, which was released earlier this year, Bench Marks recommended that mining legislature throughout the SADC region should be standardised so as to avoid being abused by unscrupulous mining corporations.