



## Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

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### Africans must unite so they can have power over the continent's future

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Africans must unite to fight corruption, water scarcity and contamination as well as environmental degradation, says the Bench Marks Foundation.

In a statement to mark Africa Day today, John Capel, Executive Director for the Bench Marks Foundation, called for Africans to hold their governments accountable and to stop exploiting their people. He also called on corporations to do this.

Capel also called for the African Union to intensify its fight for a better life for the people of Africa and to promote peace, security and stability on the continent, good governance, human rights, sustainable development and cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African people.

"Our people are suffering," says Capel. "We need to push for real solutions and actions from as many directions as we can and encourage active participation by members of communities.

"In addition, we need to work together to ensure that we have clean water to drink, have land that is not contaminated, air that is breathable and have leaders who are accountable to us.

"We have found, through our Community Monitoring School, that when communities work together, they are a force to be reckoned with.

"As more people become aware of how important it is to be active in standing against that which is destroying our continent, there will be more chance of Africans having the power over our future".

Capel says that its Community Monitoring School trains ordinary citizens to monitor corporations, such as mines and government, to ensure that they are acting in an accountable and socially responsible way.

"Our Monitoring School started six years ago and has not only extended its reach in South Africa, but also in the rest of Southern Africa.

"We provide training that helps develop writing and observation skills, social media skills as well as planning, monitoring and evaluation skills. We encourage the monitors to share their findings through community meetings, blogs and other social media tools.

"In addition, the monitors form groups which work together to submit grievances and memoranda of demands to companies on behalf of the rest of the community".

"We urge the rest of Africa to do the same not only on Africa Day, but every day. By uniting like this, we will slowly but surely win the fight for the rights of our people," says Capel.

For more information on the Community Monitoring School, go to [communitymonitors.net](http://communitymonitors.net). The latest edition of the monitor's publication, Action Voices is also available as a downloadable PDF.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, go to [www.bench-marks.org.za](http://www.bench-marks.org.za)

The Bench Marks Foundation is an organisation that monitors multinational corporations to ensure that they meet minimum social, environmental and economic standards and promotes an ethical and critical voice on what constitutes corporate social responsibility.

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Bench Marks Foundation is an independent non-governmental organisation mandated by churches to monitor the practices of multi-national corporations to

- ensure they respect human rights;
- protect the environment;
- ensure that profit-making is not done at the expense of other interest groups; and
- ensure that those most negatively impacted upon are heard, protected and accommodated within the business plans of the corporations.

The Foundation was launched by the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka who chairs the organisation and by member churches of the SACC in 2001.

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