



**Media Statement by Bench Marks Foundation on behalf of the Alternative Mining Indaba**

## **ALTERNATIVE MINING INDABA TACKLES TAX AVOIDANCE BY MINES**

**Sunday, 3 February 2013**

**For immediate release**

Tax avoidance, extreme environmental degradation of proposed, current and past mining activities, equitable redistribution of wealth and financial resources are some of the topics that will be debated at the Alternative Mining Indaba taking place from 3 to 5 February 2013 at the Strand Hotel in Cape Town.

The fourth annual indaba, convened by Bench Marks Foundation, Economic Justice Network/ Fellowship of Christian Council of Southern Africa and Norwegian Church Aid, is attended by organisations, churches, government departments and media from SA, USA, Burma, Belgium, Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, DRC, Lesotho, Cameroon, Norway, Ghana, Kenya, Botswana, Tanzania, Sweden and Canada.

John Capel, Executive Director of the Bench Marks Foundation, says that Africans are doing what they can do get out of the 'resource curse' and industrial unrests in the sector are proliferating, as can be seen with the increased number of strikes experienced in South Africa alone during 2012, the most notorious of which was the Marikana incident where so many people lost their lives.

"2012 was a watershed year for miners and mining communities in South Africa in that their plight regarding their wages and working conditions were highlighted and broadcast globally through what happened at Marikana," says Capel.

"Throughout Africa and indeed the world, mine workers and those affected by mining continue to be exploited by mining companies. Unfortunately the only time the world takes notice is when dreadful incidents occur."

Chairperson of the Bench Marks Foundation, Rt Rev Dr Bishop Jo Seoka, says that the main objective of the three-day indaba is to provide an international platform for civil society organisations to share experiences, and mobilise and motivate mining

communities to strengthen their work on advocacy and to develop strategic tools which will empower them.

“We are keen to hear from those who have successfully engaged with mining companies resulting in conflict resolution,” says Seoka. “In addition, we will utilise this platform to broaden our understanding of the economic and financial policies that facilitate tax avoidance in the mining sector.

“Mining companies are using bilateral investment treaties, investment contracts and tax havens to avoid paying tax. We want to explore the common strategies they use to do so and will name and shame those corporations that are paying no or low tax and renege on their corporate social responsibilities.”

For more information regarding the indaba, contact John Capel on [jcapel@eject.co.za](mailto:jcapel@eject.co.za) or 0828708861 or Rt Rev Dr Bishop Jo Seoka on 0828931378 or [seokajots@mweb.co.za](mailto:seokajots@mweb.co.za).

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**Notes to editors:**

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.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu launched the Foundation in 2001 and the Rt Rev Dr Jo Seoka chairs the organisation.