



## **MEDIA STATEMENT BY BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION**

### **Aurora miners' human rights have been violated**

---

**Thursday, 15 March 2011**

#### **For immediate release**

The abysmal situation thousands of miners have found themselves in following the debacle at Aurora Mine in the North West Province is nothing short of a human rights violation.

It is also yet another example of what happens when mining is promoted as the keystone for economic growth and black economic empowerment, at the expense of community interests and human rights.

So says The Bench Marks Foundation, an independent organisation that monitors corporate performance in the field of corporate social responsibility with the focus on social sustainability and economic empowerment.

"The fact that the owners of the mine are linked to past and present government officials is not something new or unusual, it is the norm in South Africa," says John Capel, Executive Director at Bench Marks Foundation.

"Senior government officials and their families are often entrenched within the boards of mining houses or indeed owning them. This begs the question as to what constitutes ethical business practices.

"There are also only a few people benefitting from black economic empowerment in the country and unfortunately it's not those in the mining communities."

Capel says that mining communities are crying out for a share of the wealth but are sidelined by the emergence of 'Juniors' in the mining industry and those in government who are reaping the benefits of mining.

"What sickens me most is when asked in a recent radio interview how the directors of the company manage to sleep at night, knowing there are thousands of people going hungry because they have not been paid by the company, they indicated they had no problem in doing so.

"I wonder how the families of those who committed suicide since the mine stopped operating or the hundreds who lined up for food aid on Tuesday would feel upon hearing that?" asks Capel.

"The miners' basic rights have been ignored and they have been treated inhumanely. Left with nothing, while the directors go home to their mansions and fridges filled with food."

The Bench Marks Foundation has called on all mining houses to put in place ethical standards that govern their relations with communities and to address their social, labour and economic impacts in

a sustainable life-giving manner so that incidents such as that experienced by the miners at Aurora is not repeated.

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.

ENDS

---

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.

Issued by Quo Vadis Communications on behalf of the Bench Marks Foundation

MEDIA CONTACT	CLIENT
Chantal Meugens Tel: 011-487-0026 Cell: 083 676 2294 E-mail: <a href="mailto:Chantal@quo-vadis.co.za">Chantal@quo-vadis.co.za</a>	John Capel Executive Director Bench Marks Foundation Tel: 011-832-1750 E-mail: <a href="mailto:jcapel@eject.co.za">jcapel@eject.co.za</a>