



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Commitments needed by all stakeholders for the betterment of mining

11 February 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A communiqué calling on African governments, the United Nations, international and local mining, business and financial houses to revolutionise the often uncaring and disrespectful way governments and mining companies treat their citizens and workers, was handed over to the African Union this week at the Mining Indaba in Cape Town.

According to Bench Marks Foundation, which is one of the signatories, the communiqué comprises several recommendations and calls to action. It was compiled by more than 350 members of civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, Pan-African networks and organisations, labour movements, industry associations, media, international partners and community-based organisations from all over the world following an intensive three-day Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI).

The AMI, that took place from 8 – 10 February 2016, is a conference created to provide a space for everyone from all over Africa and the world to discuss and workshop subjects that are wreaking havoc or working well in the mining sector.

Among the many actions called for are:

- Governments should create and implement effective legal mechanisms to investigate and prosecute environmental damage;
- The safety of communities should be protected by government from the threat of coercion, duress or intimidation;
- Artisanal mining should be decriminalised by governments;
- Governments must hold police officers involved in gold smuggling accountable for their transgressions and protect community members from their abuse;
- The rights of communities must be protected by governments;
- The international legal principle of free, prior and informed consent by communities, and not just their leaders, must be observed before exploration licences are granted;
- Governments must create space for civil society and communities to strengthen dialogue when setting national priorities, and in considering the utilisation of mining revenue and other public resources;
- Companies and governments must publish contracts for public scrutiny in order to increase accountability for tax and royalty revenues;
- There must be recognition and respect on the part of companies and governments for the right of communities to say 'no' to mining projects or to the terms of proposals and contracts by recognising the principles of community consent and free, prior and informed consent for indigenous communities;
- Companies must end Artisanal mining as a means to provide cheap products to on-sell;
- Companies must offer fair prices for our resources;
- The development, implementation and enforcement by companies and government, appropriate grievance mechanisms for communities and individuals whose rights have been violated;
- Companies and governments must proactively create space for women's voices in decision-making processes that directly or indirectly affect them due to extractive operations before, during and after operations; and
- Companies and governments must include gender impact indicators within all environmental and social impact assessments.

The full list of requirements can be found on AMI's website www.altminingindaba.co.za.

The members of the AMI have committed to all actions stated in the communiqué and have pledged their ongoing support as well as their commitment to working with governments, corporations and communities as well as any other progressive forces to ensure that these demands and actions are met.

It is their hope that all stakeholders mentioned in the communiqué reciprocate and also commit to these actions and to working with civil society for the betterment of the people affected by the mining sector.

The theme of AMI 2016 was "Making natural resources work for the people and ended with a march to the Cape Town International Convention Centre to highlight the injustices communities and miners endure as a result of mining and the high incidences of deaths experienced as a result of mining. To date, those directly representing the mining companies have not accepted declarations from the Alternative Mining Indaba.

For more information on the AMI, go to www.altminingindaba.co.za. In addition, you can follow on Facebook.

For more information on the Bench Marks Foundation, go to www.bench-marks.org.za.

The following organisations are stakeholders and sponsors of the AMI2016: The Economic Justice Network of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association, Publish what you pay, Norwegian Church Aid, South African Council of Churches, Mozambique CC, Bench Marks Foundation, Diakonia, Council of Churches Zambia, Zimbabwe Council of Churches and Oxfam.

Participants in the AMI2016 included people from Zimbabwe, Zambia, USA, UK, Uganda, Thailand, Tanzania, Switzerland, Sweden, Swailand, South Sudan, South Africa, Senegal, Norway, Nigeria, Netherlands, Myanmar, Mozambique, Mauritius, Mali, Malawi, Liberia, Lesotho, Kenya, Ghana Germany, Denmark, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Colombia, Canada, Cameroon, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Australia and Angola.

ENDS

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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