



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Memorandum ignored by Mining Indaba

9 February 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Yet again organisers of the Mining Indaba and leaders of the sector have snubbed mining communities and civil society during a march by those attending the Alternative Mining Indaba on 9 February 2015.

The crowd, bearing placards with messages such as 'no to tax dodging'; 'women say no to mining and yes to life'; 'protect our children'; our mineral resources, our future'; 'count the full cost'; 'stop exploitation' and 'we need investments that care for local communities' walked through the streets of Cape Town ending the march on the streets in front of the Cape Town International Convention Centre, where the Mining Indaba is held.

"The march was peaceful and we certainly got our point across," says John Capel, Executive Director of the Bench Marks Foundation.

"But, the fact that they wouldn't accept the memorandum is bizarre and despicable given the wealth the miners bring to shareholders and the responsibility they have for good governance.

"It is irresponsible for the investors to sit at the Mining Indaba and cut deals at the expense of the poor communities. They act as if these people don't count and don't exist and they are not human.

"The communities live above the riches that these mining companies want to come and extract and it's these communities that suffer endlessly. The scramble for Africa's resources continues unabated.

"In addition investors elsewhere in the world are benefitting and enriching themselves while our people continue to endure the huge expense to their environment, water and air. One cannot even measure these expenses or the social damages that occur as a result of mining.

"We are going to release a study later this year which shows life before and after mining in one particular area. The results are revealing and startling".

Capel reiterated the organisation's stance on communities being included in the Mining Indaba: "How can a conference that directly affects hundreds of thousands of people, exclude these very important stakeholders?"

"We believe that at least 50% of the people at that conference should consist of communities and civil society. At least they have a say at the Alternative Mining which is taking place from 9-12 February 2015".

The Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) takes place at the Upper Eastside Hotel in Woodstock, Cape Town.

"They (mining companies) can try to ignore us, but we will continue to do whatever we can to get our voices heard. We will not give up and we will not shut up until there is nothing about us without us!" says Capel.

The AMI provides an international platform for all interested stakeholders to share experiences, mobilise and motivate mining communities to strengthen their work on advocacy for environmentally and human rights conscious natural resource governance, develop strategic tools that will empower Africa's citizens to meaningfully participate in natural resource governance, facilitate and foster better engagement between mining communities, governments and mining companies, facilitate and foster better engagement between mining communities, governments and mining companies and to provide a voice to the lived

experiences of communities affected by mining. More than 60 organisations from around the world form part of the AMI and over 300 people from 37 countries are attending the 6th Annual AMI this year.

For more information on the AMI, email alternativeminingindaba2015@gmail.com.

Follow the indaba on Twitter: @AltMiningIndaba and on <http://alternativeminingindaba.blogspot.com/>.

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

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.

Alternative Mining Indaba Contact details:
Bench Marks Foundation Contact:
Mr John Capel, Executive Director 011 832 1743 or 082 870 8861 Email: jcapel@eject.co.za
Economic Justice Network
Rev Malcolm Damon ED of Economic Justice Network 021 424 9563 Email: admin@ejn.org.za @malcolm_ejn