



Media statement by the Bench Marks Foundation

Sibanye-Stillwater safety record raises questions, says Bench Marks

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The relatively high number of deaths at Sibanye-Stillwater mines this year could be an indication that the company is putting profits and acquisitions ahead of the safety of workers, says John Capel, Executive Director of Bench Marks Foundation.

Capel was responding to the latest news of deaths of four mine workers at an abandoned area of a mine south of Johannesburg. Another miner is still missing. Further deaths at Sibanye-Stillwater mines have occurred in May and February this year.

“We note that CEO Neal Froneman told investors that the mine had noticed a regression in safety performance. Our question to Mr Froneman is: what are you doing about it, beyond expressing regret?” Capel said.

He added: “Ultimately, top management is responsible for the performance of all aspects of mining activity in its company, including the safety aspects. By pointing out that seismic activity cannot be controlled, Mr Froneman appears to be suggesting that an increase in mine deaths is something beyond his influence. In any event, seismic activity is caused by mining, and there is no acknowledgement of this by Sibanye.

“Mr Froneman is on record as saying that most accidents result from human behaviour. But no one willingly puts their life in danger. What pressures are being exerted on workers to perform to levels that may compromise their safety?” asks Capel.

“This is a company that has been aggressively pursuing acquisitions in the past few years. It is paying interest of \$100m annually to service its debt incurred in acquiring Stillwater in 2017. That must put a lot of pressure on the company to generate profit. Is it any wonder that observers question whether safety remains a top priority at Sibanye-Stillwater?” he asked.

Capel added that the clear and unambiguous answers were needed to these questions and he called on Sibanye-Stillwater to provide them without obfuscation.

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

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