



SUNRISE Sector for Whom?

Mining, Mantashe and the challenges ahead

The swearing in of Gwede Mantashe as Minister of Mineral Resources appears to be progress compared to his predecessor and fits in smoothly with the narrative of the new administration that sees mining not as a sunset industry but one on the rise. The new president too, has had a long association with mining unions and also had significant shares in mining.

“If the mining sector is to be a sun-shine sector it has to ensure, it does not crowd out the search for clean, democratic and empowering alternatives, and factors the very real concerns of the water crisis and climate change”, said John Capel.

Sunshine sector for whom?

“The poor and working people will not accept the obligation of saving the sector, whilst they die of poverty, marginalisation and illnesses directly related to mining. These externalisation of costs onto people and the environment must come to an end...and we hope the new Minister will be firm in this regard!” he added.

The Foundation celebrates the recent court “victory” that ensures that mining communities and their organisations will be permitted to participate in drafting the revised mining charter, but we point out that this is but the beginning. The real test for us, is whether mining communities that have since colonial times been systemically excluded from decision making in matters concerning their own lives will have the legal right in the MPRDA to talk for themselves. In addition, we believe that participation will be meaningless without the building of strong democratic mass organisations of the poor, with professional and quality technical support provided by the authorities being provided. It follows that since mining is not a solution for all, nor for all our problems – mining communities must have the right to say NO to Mining and these wishes must be respected and the alternative forms of producing livelihoods be affirmed, supported by all the resources available in the democratic state. Punishing communities for choosing other developmental paths is anti-democratic and unjust and will be resisted.

We also know that mining communities lack information and access to social justice and hope the new minister will support the work of the Bench Marks Foundation around levelling out the playing fields between mines and communities. We need to strengthen community’s democratic and constitutional rights. Communities are severely disadvantaged when a mines arrive with a lot of promises that mining is investment and investment in them, only to suffer livelihood loss, land and be uprooted or impacted upon when they believed otherwise. Thus we have been calling on the industry to support an Independent Capacity Building Fund that allows communities access to specialist expertise and advice around environmental impact assessments, social and economic impacts so they can make

informed decisions. In addition communities have no real way to resolve problems. In this regard we are establishing the Independent Problem Solving Service using impartial facilitators to assist communities to resolve problems with the industry. We hope the new minister will be open to listen to a wide range of issues related to interest and impacted groups.

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