

Mantashe wants Mining Charter agreement in three months

In his first public comments on the Mining Charter, new Mineral Resources Minister Gwede Mantashe said on Wednesday he would like the document outlining obligations on companies to transform to be finalised in three months.



The third iteration of the charter was gazetted by his predecessor, Mosebenzi Zwane, in June 2017 and has been suspended pending the outcome of legal action brought by the Chamber of Mines to have it reviewed and set aside.

One of the first actions of new President Cyril Ramaphosa was to call the chamber into a meeting last weekend ahead of the four-day court case to get it to agree to postpone the legal action to give talks around a new charter a chance.

Ramaphosa replaced the ill-regarded Zwane in a reshuffle with Mantashe, a veteran miner and leader of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Mantashe told reporters on the steps of Parliament in a brief interaction that he had set himself a three-month time-frame to finalise the charter.

However, on Wednesday the chamber declined to say whether it had been consulted by Mantashe on the three-month time-frame or whether it was an achievable target.

"A new Mining Charter that is well designed and reached through an inclusive negotiation process needs to be finalised as soon as possible," the chamber said on Wednesday in response to Mantashe's comments.

"The process of developing a charter that all parties can live with and defend needs to be an inclusive one characterised by meaningful engagement and negotiation with representation by a broad range of stakeholders including government, business, labour and communities."

Mantashe's time-frame seems overly ambitious when compared with what chamber management envisioned for a new charter when they spoke at the Mining Indaba in Cape Town early in February.

The High Court in Pretoria ruled in February that communities affected by mining must be included in talks to formulate a new charter.

Mining companies know the difficulties in engaging communities - with power shifts in communities, especially once money starts flowing into an area - making it tough to find the true representatives of the people who are supposed to benefit from mining activities.

The chamber has flagged this as a potential difficulty in pending talks.

Source: *Business Day*

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