

Zwane remains upbeat about sector

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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While acknowledging that the South African mining industry is in trouble, the new Minister of Mineral Resources, Mosebenzi Zwane, remains upbeat about where the sector is going.

Delivering the keynote address at the 2016 Mining Indaba, the minister used a rather lyrical analogy regarding the cyclical nature of life, saying: “The 2016 Mining Indaba comes at a time when the mining industry is in its winter season, a season which some have characterised as a crisis.”

Minister Zwane took office in September 2015 and said he has taken the first four months of his term consulting with stakeholders to gain insights into the market.

“ Minister [#Zwane](#) has arrived for the [#MiningIndaba](#) media briefing pic.twitter.com/iLKQlg3PJd— SA Gov News (@SAGovnews) [February 8, 2016](#) ”

Winter is here

“I am convinced that during our summer season, as an industry, we have failed ourselves in not preparing better for this winter. Having said that, the question that we need to ask ourselves is this – what lessons can be learnt to ensure that, as we move into the next season, our workers don’t remain the ones worst affected by the winter?” he asked.

He said that the government has prioritised the processing and finalisation of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development (MPRD) Amendment Bill, and is also in the process of reviewing the Mining Charter to provide a stable legislative framework for the industry.

Labour

His comments regarding labour disputes and the platinum strike in particular deftly brushed over any reference to the Marikana Massacre in 2012 in which 44 miners were killed.

“The industry had experienced fewer labour disruptions recently, but lessons should be learnt from the protracted platinum strike, in which there were no winners,” he said.

Although the Constitution guarantees workers the right to strike, rather than resorting to violence and intimidation, the focus on resolving labour issues should be on co-existence in a manner that advances development objectives including the

betterment of working and living conditions of mineworkers, the minister said.

While some of the large mining houses attained zero fatalities in 2015, this record was marred more recently by mining tragedies such as the accident at Lilly and emphasises the continued need for vigilance.

“The quest to achieve zero-harm in the mining industry remains a priority,” Minister Zwane said.

The future looks bright

Despite being in the midst of a cold, hard winter, South Africa has relatively good prospects for upstream oil and gas development including shale gas.

“We are encouraged by the level of interest expressed in this emerging industry and government has already strengthened the regulatory framework relating to oil and gas development,” he concluded.

Following on the minister’s speech, His Highness Lamido Sanusi, Emir of Kano and chairman of Black Rhino Group, explained - in his keynote address - that a fundamental requirement for African economic growth and development is to maximise its natural resources and for that the continent needs an enabling infrastructure.

“Less than 5% of Africa’s oil and gas potential have been tapped due to infrastructure constraints, and the continent is not competitive because of lack of infrastructure investment. Growth is dependent on direct foreign investment to unlock these bottlenecks,” he said.

He pointed out that fundamental to attaining this objective is political will to create an enabling infrastructure.

“Reliance on public sector investment in infrastructure is unsustainable,” the Emir said.

The Mining Indaba 2016 is currently under way at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 8-11 February. For more info, go to www.miningindaba.com.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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