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Government, Industry Establish A New Body To Enable Labour Participation In SA Mining Research



With the modernisation of mining taking shape in South Africa, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), industry and trade unions have established a new forum that will see labour participate actively in mining research in the country.

The DSI and the Minerals Council South Africa – through the Mandela Mining Precinct (MMP) – established the MMP-Organised Labour Consultative Forum in Pretoria today, with the signing of the terms of reference for the forum.

The MMP is a public-private partnership between the DSI and the Minerals Council South Africa, a mining-industry employer organisation. Hosted jointly by the Minerals Council South Africa and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the Mandela Mining Precinct seeks to revitalise mining research, development and innovation in South Africa to ensure the long-term sustainability of the industry.

At the signing ceremony, labour organisations welcomed the new initiative and expressed their commitment to inclusivity in the mining industry.

The organisations include the United Association of South Africa (UASA), the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), Solidarity and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU).

The terms of reference detail the extent of organised labour's involvement in and contribution to the MMP's research and development agenda and plans for a modernised and mechanised mining industry.

"The MMP's engagements with organised labour are viewed as critical to the success of our research work and technological development," said MMP Director, Johan le Roux.

"Through the Successful Application of Technologies Centred Around People (SATCAP) research programme, organised labour has been continuously consulted on various developments, such as the Isidingo Drill prototypes," he added.

The establishment of this forum thus formalised a long-standing relationship and commitment to a strong focus on a sustainable and modernised mining industry for the benefit of South Africa.

The aim of the SATCAP research programme is to understand the challenges, effects and impacts of mining modernisation on people in the minerals sector.

CSIR CEO Dr Thulani Dlamini said that today marked a significant milestone for the Mandela Mining Precinct. "We commit ourselves to working together towards a common objective, and look forward to the fruits of this partnership," he said.

The Director-General of Science and Technology, Dr Phil Mjwara, said the new initiative served as an important blueprint.

"The modernisation of mining will result in a substantial change in the skills required by mine employees. My message to the Minerals Council is for us to work together to develop the skills plan in anticipation of the modernisation of the mining industry. We are committed and we will continue to provide an enabling environment for the mining industry," said Dr Mjwara.

The President of the Minerals Council, Ms Nolitha Fakude, said the council was encouraged by the progress being made in research and innovation. "We welcome organised labour as a partner to this initiative. They are critical in playing a meaningful role in the modernisation journey," she said.

In a recorded message, Acting Secretary-General of NUM, William Mabapa, said the organisation was "looking forward to receiving inputs as to how the partnership could ensure this modernisation journey left no one behind".

"Thank you for the opportunity to make meaningful input into the important modernisation research agenda," said the Manager of NUMSA's Research and Policy Institute, Melanie Roy.

Solidarity General Secretary Gideon du Plessis emphasised that a smooth transition should be ensured, while UASA Divisional Manager for Minerals, Franz Stehring, recalled previous conversations on union participation in the modernisation agenda, which had started long before the MMP was established.



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