



Official opening address of the XV CMMI Congress

by S.P. Molefe*

Mr Chairman, members of the executive committee, the sub-committee, distinguished speakers at this opening plenary session, delegates, affiliates, ladies and gentlemen.

It is with pleasure that I have been called upon today to make these opening remarks and officially welcome you all at this auspicious assembly, the Fifteenth Congress of the Council of Mining and Metallurgical Institutions.

Not only am I pleased to open the proceedings at this plenary session but for me to do so at Sun City in the North-West Province makes me doubly pleased. It is my wish that all delegates and their companions will enjoy the activities that are planned throughout the Congress and leave here with minds refreshed and stimulated by the technical sessions and memories enriched by being in such a unique and truly delightful setting as exists here at Sun City.

The mix of delegates present reflects CMMI activities in many countries throughout the world—Australia, Japan, China, United Kingdom and South Africa among others. When it comes to mining and related activities, South Africa has a place at the top, a dominant role in platinum, gold, chromium, vanadium, dimension stone, coal and so forth, and here in the North-West Province we can proudly declare that some 25 per cent of the revenue from minerals in South Africa, namely R47 billion come from this area. Furthermore, we lead in the production of platinum group metals with 94 per cent of South Africa's total sales and thus hold first place in the world, 46 per cent of dimension stone sales, 32 per cent of chromate and 25 per cent of gold sales.

In total, the contribution from North-West Province to total South Africa mineral sales in 1993 was 25 per cent or 11,8 billion rand, that is, 3,6 billion United States dollars at a ruling exchange rate of 3,3 rand to the dollar.

So it is indeed fitting to hold the Congress here in North-West Province at Sun City. Of course the legend of the Lost City where an ancient civilization thrived and prospered in agricultural, mining, metal working, and trading skill, lives in the reality of today where, amidst the ancient bushveld rocks, so many mines and quarries are operating. Undoubtedly the mining industry can be the creator of wealth, jobs and secondary industries.

That is why my Government is rather disappointed that there is a lack of secondary industries in this region in the same fashion as in Johannesburg. Building that sector would have the effect of cushioning the region when faced with the vicissitudes of international prices or, indeed the worst scenario of a mine facing closure. We rely on you, the creators of wealth, to develop a long-term strategy in this regard. I can't see any reason why a small business sector cannot be developed. Elsewhere in the world it has been the beacon of economic revival. The theme for this XV Congress, namely, 'resources and technology', is more important and relevant in our modern world of today than it ever was in days gone by.

It is the wish of my government in the North-West Province to involve the local communities, the various economic sectors, and the government in a tripartite relationship whereby the goal of the reconstruction and development programme (the RDP) can be reached in terms of:

- ▶ meeting basic needs — housing, health, water, sanitation, nutrition, elimination of poverty
- ▶ developing human resources by means of education and training
- ▶ building the economy by making the province a focal point to attract investment and provide jobs in the mining and related industries
- ▶ Democratizing the state of society so that all the stakeholders in the new South Africa can be heard and consulted.

* The Honourable Premier of the North-West Region.

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As you know, the RDP plans to heal the ills of the past by bridging the gap between those who were privileged and the deprived. It is, therefore, logical that you the creators of wealth should play an incisive role in this partnership. In our province only 30 per cent of our population have access to clean drinking water and 10 per cent to sanitation. Very few black people enjoy electricity and there is a massive shortage of housing. I see no reason why big business cannot adopt projects to address these issues in the various communities where blatant evils abound.

I am aware that certain mining companies have already got into gear with regard to allocating land and funds for RDP purposes. Importantly, the implementation of the RDP must go hand in hand with building the economy—in other words, reconstruction must take place with growth so that the economic spiral goes upwards, and business confidence remains at a high level.

In the mining industry large amounts of risk capital are put into various ventures and despite the concerted efforts of management and employees, it is true that profit or loss can be finely balanced by the market prices prevailing. Of course, this important factor is to a great extent outside the control of the mineral industry. As previously mentioned, there is a spirit evident in the mining industry of the North-West Province, to be a partner in progress in spite of the constant efforts having

to be made to improve efficiency and productivity levels in the face of the low metal prices currently prevailing on world markets. I commend the mining industry efforts in the North-West Province and am confident our partnership in progress will grow and flourish in the years that lie ahead to the benefit of all the stakeholders. Hopefully in the near future metal prices will rise and thus contribute to the upward economic spiral which we need for continuing prosperity.

It is important also to emphasize that the North-West Provincial Government is fully cognizant of the need to maintain business confidence at a high level which can so easily be undermined by economic indiscipline. In other words we want our investors to feel comfortable, to be happy and eager to do business in the province.

Mr Chairman, I am most grateful to you for allowing me this opportunity to put across to this distinguished audience the way ahead, as I see it. May I now in conclusion trust that you all will have a rewarding time here this week, whether you are attending the geology, mining, extractive metallurgy, metals technology sessions, the EXPO '94 displays, the affiliate's programme or even venturing into the hall of treasures in pursuit of that elusive million mania prize.

Ladies and gentlemen, I now have the pleasure and the honour of declaring this XV Congress of the CMMI open. ♦

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