

Spotlight

Minerals and Mining Policy Workshops

March 1996

The Steering Committee for Minerals and Mining Policy convened two workshops during March 1996 to address the following topics:

Business Environment: National and Provincial Powers, Administration and Regulation, Mineral Marketing, Beneficiation, Research and Development, Environmental Issues, Mining Impact on Surface Usage, Southern Africa Regional Issues.

Human Resources: Elementary Residual Racism, Housing, Downscaling, Migrant Labour and Human Resource Development.

Mineral Tenure: Mineral Rights, System of Access to Mineral Rights, Access to Exploration Information, Optimal Exploration, Trust Lands.

Small-scale Mining: Development of Small-scale Mining, Artisanal Mining.

The objective of these workshops was to arrive at a common vision for a Minerals and Mining Policy. A discussion document on a Minerals and Mining Policy for South Africa issued in November 1995 formed the basis for the workshop. This document was prepared by the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs and the Mineral and Energy Policy Centre on behalf of the Mineral Policy Process Steering Committee, and contains a variety of stakeholder views on the policy issues. This document is available from The Director, Minerals Bureau, Private Bag X4, Braamfontein, 2017.

A green paper is being prepared for issuing at the end of July 1996, and the white paper is planned for October 1996, followed by a national conference in November 1996.

The aspects of the workshop most related to the interests of members were Human Resource Development, Research and Development, Environmental, Beneficiation, and Mineral Rights. Health and Safety is covered by a separate New Mines Health and Safety Act and is not addressed in the Mineral and Mining Policy. Human Resource Development is specifically addressed in the New Mines Health and Safety Act.

The following is a summary of the main areas of interest in regard to the proposed policy.

Research and Development

To support and co-ordinate surveys, investigations, and research, which are essential to stimulate the optimal development of the country's mineral resources but which cannot be conducted within the normal business-risk limits of private industry. Research and development efforts should be directed to areas of high need in the present mainstream industry, particularly health and safety, as well as to priority areas identified by the Reconstruction and Development Programme, particularly small-scale mining and mineral beneficiation.

A mining and mineral-processing research and development commission should be established for the

purposes of making best use of the existing facilities, to promote collaborative research efforts, to promote technology transfer, and to ensure that minerals-related research and development is conducted in accordance with the country's science and technology policy and national objectives for the mineral industry.

Beneficiation

The aim of the policy shall be to develop South Africa's mineral wealth to its full potential and to the maximum benefit of the entire population. The Government shall promote the establishment of secondary and tertiary mineral-based industries aimed at creating job opportunities and adding maximum value to mineral raw materials, where economically justifiable.

Environmental Management

The policy shall provide for the maintenance of balanced and responsible standards with regard to the interface between mining and the environment that are based on local needs and requirements, but also take due cognisance of international practices.

Mineral Rights and Security of Tenure

The policy shall recognise State, as well as private, ownership of mineral rights, and shall encourage utilisation of such rights within prevailing economic conditions. It shall also provide for indisputable security of tenure with regard to mineral rights and prospecting, and mining authorisations.

Mineral Marketing

A number of Vision Statements were tabled by various stakeholders at the workshop. These were discussed, and a proposed overall vision was proposed as follows: 'To develop, optimise and sustain the mining industry, especially to earn foreign exchange, create jobs, and provide a base for growth and development'.

The policy shall endorse free-market principles, and shall allow Government intervention only to the extent of meeting the aims of the policy. The opportunities to increase the global consumption of certain minerals and metals produced in South Africa by joint marketing and promotion efforts, for example the World Gold Council, and research and development should be encouraged. A small levy on sales should be considered to fund such market-development efforts. ♦

Enquiries regarding the workshop can be made to:
The Secretariat (Attention Mr R. Goode)
Mineral and Mining Policy Workshops
P.O. Box 395, WITS, 2050
Telephone: (011) 403-8013; Fax: (011) 403-8023/4.