



# MEDIA STATEMENT

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## CHAMBER OF MINES NOTES WITH CONCERN REPORTS OF TRAPPED ILLEGAL MINERS AT LANGLAAGTE

### *Challenges related to illegal mining are significant*

**Johannesburg, 12 September 2016.** The Chamber of Mines notes with concern the reports of the illegal miners, also known as zama-zamas, that have been trapped at an abandoned mine in Langlaagte, south of Johannesburg.

The Chamber is hoping for the rescue of all of those who have been trapped. The industry's Mine Rescue Services has been involved in seeking to rescue individuals in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

Illegal mining is a very serious challenge in South Africa. Illegal mining is extremely dangerous, with illegal miners risking their lives to open cemented shafts with explosives on abandoned mines. At operational mines, they often live underground for extended periods of time, without the necessary protective gear once they have gained access to these operations.

It presents a range of negative social and financial impacts including the serious risk to the personal safety of both illegal and legal miners and – very often rescue volunteers - the negative impact on the environment, damages and losses caused to operating mines and the introduction of criminal elements into communities. Where illegal mining undermines the viability of operating mines, it may also lead to job losses. It also creates losses for the fiscus through unpaid royalties and taxes.

Illegal mining has been on the rise in recent years, largely owing to South Africa's economic environment where there has been an increase in unemployment and poverty.

Illegal mining is often organised and carried out by organised crime syndicates. Illegal miners themselves are exploited by criminal syndicates.

Illegal miners are often heavily armed and where trespassing on operating mines, set ambushes and booby traps for employees, security and rival groups of illegal miners.

The challenges are significant and the Chamber recognises that no single stakeholder can address issues related to illegal mining on its own. The industry, through the Chamber of Mines, and individual companies will continue to work with other stakeholders including the DMR and the SAPS to address this serious challenge. While we have sympathy for the individuals and families, we do believe that the law must be observed, and individuals and organisations must be held accountable.

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