

# Speaking notes for **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AND MODERNISATION HEROES**



## **Ms Nolitha Fakude,** **Chair- Minerals Council South Africa** **Women in Mining Leadership Forum.**

**8 March 2022**



Programme Director,

Our partners in the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy

Our partners in organised labour

Honoured guests and media

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our breakfast to mark International Women's Day and its theme: Break the Bias.

This year's theme is particularly relevant for our country and for our mining industry. At a country level, we are inundated with news of gender-based violence and femicide, and this scourge is carried through the gates of our mining operations and into the daily lives of women employed at mines.

The Report into Workplace Culture at Rio Tinto, which independently assessed the Australian company's global operations, including South Africa, gave us a sobering wake up call that all is not well in our industry despite all the work we have done on addressing gender issues and challenges.

The report gave the Minerals Council and its members reason to reflect and recommit to their efforts to address GBVF, sexism, racism, and bullying at South African mining operations. It is an opportunity to contemplate the efficacy of the studies, guidelines, policies, and interventions undertaken by the industry to resolve these problems.

South African mining operations reflect the communities from which they draw their employees. Our country has worryingly high levels of societal problems, including GBVF, sexism,

racism, and violence. We have the world's fourth highest femicide rate. A fifth of women are assaulted by their partners, while half of reported assaults of women are perpetrated by close friends, family, or spouses. We have a broken society where women and children are not safe at home, at work or school, or in their communities.

The Minerals Council and its members acknowledge and address these deep-seated, ingrained societal issues that manifest in their mines to make them safe, nonthreatening places of work, to make them places where women are comfortable and allowed to reach their full potential, not held back, or endangered because of their gender.

Key to this is breaking the bias.

It is one of the seven Women in Mining Foundations the Minerals Council South Africa has implemented to initiate unconscious bias training to change culture within our organisation and within our 79 member companies and associations.

Today's International Women's Day theme is breaking the bias and it is a time to acknowledge and reinforce the fact that women have an equal role alongside men to play in creating the world, the country, the workplaces, the home environments we all want to see, one where there is gender parity and gender balance, free of stereotypes, free of bias.

The Women in Mining (WiM) Leadership Forum was established by the Minerals Council to enhance the representation and development of women in the mining

industry, to achieve the ambition of equal representation of women by addressing the leadership commitment to gender diversity inclusion, as well as the attraction, retention, and development of women in mining.

Unconscious bias happens automatically when our brain makes quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment, and personal experiences. Addressing this will enable workplaces that have engaged, inspired employees, innovative and creative teams, a strong brand reputation and high performing teams. Company leadership is critical to change corporate culture to address unconscious bias. This can be done by building programmes into existing policies and protocols and establishing dedicated teams to develop best practices to eliminate unconscious bias and drive internal initiatives. This is work the Minerals Council is continuing with its members well beyond this day.

International Women's Day started in 1911. In more than a century, and yet we are still dealing with the same issues affecting women and their role in society. But increasingly gender stereotyping is confronted by business and broader society, with growing representation of women. To do more, we need progressive thinking and inclusivity to harness the inherent potential that has been side lined for so long in gender bias.

In South Africa, there is little doubt we have a long, difficult journey ahead of us. We have one of the world's best constitutions to help us on that journey and there are significant improvements from where we were just a few decades ago, but there is so much more to do.

The [World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021](#) shows just how far we still have to go.

In economic participation and opportunity, South Africa is ranked 92 out of 156 countries, while in political empowerment we come in at a respectable 14, with strong representation of women in political positions. In educational attainment and health & survival, South Africa is virtually at gender parity.

Delving into the underlying data, shows clear areas of concern. In being paid equal wages for equal work, South Africa is ranked 131 out of 156 countries. It is inexplicable. It is unacceptable. What is the bias that still exists that women must be paid less than their male counterparts for doing the same or similar work?

While it's small comfort, in the Global Gender Gap rankings South Africa is third in Sub-Saharan Africa behind Namibia and Rwanda and 18th globally out of 156 countries, unchanged from 2006.

Imagine the economic potential we can unlock for our country if we use the skills, expertise and thinking of all society instead of just half. We have the framework to do so, with legislation and workplace policies and procedures that promote equality.

It is with this in mind that the mining industry has set the target of gender parity in management during the next decade and have up to 40% of women representation across the industry in that time. As of September 2021, 14% or 64,500 out of the industry's 455,200 employees were women. Our member companies want to double women representation by 2025.

Zero tolerance of GBVF and sexism is imperative in reaching these stretch targets. Breaking the bias and addressing unconscious bias is vital in this journey.

In the Minerals Council and among our members, there is a strong drive to modernise and mechanise mining operations as part of not only making mines safer and more productive, but to allow both men and women to work in these environments.

Modernisation needs women and women need modernisation.

As the industry and the county seek to build back better following the disruptions created by the pandemic, the Minerals Council wants to acknowledge the role of modernisation in accelerating transformation and growth. This campaign followed on from the 2020 Covid Heroes

The work of women in mining and their role in the adoption and implementation of modernised approaches, research and systems implementation is often unrecognised. That is why as part of today's events we would like to honour and celebrate these unsung heroes in the mining industry.

Our ten Women in Mining Modernisation heroes were selected out of more than 180 nominees for making a marked contribution to her company's modernisation strategies and rollout. The ten heroes displayed two key characteristics, namely the ability to identify opportunities to innovate processes, services, ways of work and products, and secondly to make this change happen positively for people in the company.

As we seek to break the bias and create equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender, these women truly are our heroes. They give us all something to aspire to and to make a difference in our own ways.

Let us leave here today, more resolute than when we arrived to **#BreakTheBias**.

I thank you.