

**Notes for Mr Sipho Nkosi,**  
**President of the Chamber of Mines,**  
**At the MOSH Adoption Celebratory Dinner**  
**On 25 November 2008**  
**At Glenburn Lodge**

Good evening guest of honour, ladies and gentlemen.

Before I start, may I tender apologies on behalf of the Chief Inspector of Mines and his senior staff. I understand that they would have loved to be here, but unfortunately have their departmental strategic break-away at this same time.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you at this dinner, which happens at, what I consider one of the most important events on the agenda of the mining industry insofar as it signifies the commitment of the industry to eradicate injury, death and disease in the workplace.

I clearly remember the day I personally signed our commitment to the targets and milestones developed by the Mine Health and Safety Council in 2003. It was a proud moment for the mining industry when its leaders pledged their support to the objective of continual improvement in our health and safety record in the workplace until the ultimate goal of zero harm is achieved. As part of our journey, it is our aspiration to reach world-class status in our performance by 2013. I am honoured to be part of the only industry in the country that has such a clear vision on health and safety in its working environment.

I am also gratified to note that the industry has made significant improvements in attaining its health and safety objectives. Over the last decade the number of fatalities has been halved, which is a remarkable achievement. Having acknowledged this, however, I am very concerned that this improved safety performance reached a

plateau in 2006 and 2007. This stands in stark contrast to our vision of zero harm and is not to be tolerated. We do not, however, want to fall into the trap of doing the same thing and expecting a different result each time. Such behaviour, I believe, Einstein described as insane.

Our CEOs, I am relieved and happy to report, are not insane. Their attitude is that enough is enough, and change is imperative. As a consequence of this determination, a roadmap to zero harm was approved at the last Chamber Executive Council meeting, outlining the changes required to lift health and safety figures from the slump into which they had fallen.

As part of this roadmap, the industry declared its firm belief that all safety and occupational health incidents are preventable, although some with more difficulty than others. The industry has also declared unequivocally that health and safety is a core value that will always take precedence over production. Adherence to this principle requires collaboration, greater learning, and taking responsibility rather than apportioning blame.

Your participation in this workshop today and tomorrow is a reflection of the change that is taking place. Only with your involvement can the Chamber's biggest project in recent times be realised. I am humbled to be a part of this process, and to be opening this welcoming you at this dinner in my capacity as president of the Chamber of Mines.

It is inevitable that the industry would embrace the adoption of best practices, given that the sector is typified by excellent performers. Many of our mining companies are nothing less than world class. I have been told that if every company were to perform as well as the best in their commodity sector, we would be right on track towards achieving our vision. So what prevents us from learning from these pockets of excellence? Why is it that at times we let our egos get in the way of a safer and healthier future for those working in our industry? Particularly in these times of skills shortage and falling commodity prices, no company can afford to re-invent the wheel. It is time to join forces and work together to deal with the formidable challenges that remain on the health and safety front.

I believe that you have all worked very hard this year in piloting the best practice adoption system, and should be justifiably proud of the successes achieved thus far. It may sound strange, but I am also pleased to hear that you have and are experiencing significant challenges and what some may regard as failures. These should not discourage you. We knew this would be a difficult task, hence allowing a year for piloting. As long as the shortfalls enable greater understanding of how to more effectively meet the targets set, they are acceptable.

For those of you who may not know, this year does not mark the end of the best practice adoption system in South African mining. Our CEOs have agreed to the establishment of a Learning Hub in the industry. This is not a peripheral undertaking within the Chamber but forms part of a new strategic role for the organisation. The primary focus of the hub will be to help companies learn from each other and related organisations. We have to make this work. We have to prove to government and other stakeholders that prevention, and not punishment, is the course to follow. We are very keen to have your inputs on how we can make this work better from henceforward.

I firmly believe that by participating in this workshop, you are making history and shaping the future in our quest for zero harm. I wish you an enjoyable and fun-filled evening! Thank you.