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THE CHAMBER OF MINES OF SOUTH AFRICA WELCOMES REMARKS MADE BY PRESIDENT  
THABO MBEKI ON MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE ENERGY SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Acting Chief Executive of the Chamber of Mines of South Africa, Dr Frans Barker, expressed his appreciation of the remarks of the President of South Africa in his State of the Nation Address in Cape Town today.

Barker said: 'The Chamber of Mines appreciates the tribute paid by President Mbeki to the mining industry, for the way in which it assisted the economy to deal with the crisis that hit the country on the 24 January.' The industry also appreciates the commitment expressed by the President that the industry will all work to minimise the adverse impact on production.

The Chamber fully endorses the President's remarks about South Africa being a minerals resource economy. The mining sector remains the country's largest foreign exchange earner, with primary and secondary minerals accounting for over 50% of merchandise exports. Without mining, the country's balance of payments, which is an important determinant of the value of the currency, will be in dire straights. Furthermore, about a million people are directly and indirectly dependent on the mining industry for work, and this at a time when the country is suffering from a serious unemployment problem. Were it not for these jobs, many millions of dependents would be destitute. It is thus critical to continue to support the mining industry.

Barker further confirmed that the Chamber of Mines and its members were continuing discussions with Eskom and the government to find sustainable solutions to the electricity supply constraints in a manner that is least disruptive for the mining industry and the economy. He also confirmed that members of the Chamber of Mines were part of the emergency task team mentioned by the President, which are working on the challenges of coal quality and supply.

According to Barker, the Chamber also supports the President's urging the nation to play a unified role in terms of "**Business Unusual**" as all stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure that electricity demand is reduced in an equitable and fair manner - this included households, municipalities, government, industrial and the parastatal sector.

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