



President 2017-2018

Reflections on my Presidential Year

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The SAIMM is built on the foundations of the mining and minerals industry, and serves the interests of the professionals that work in the industry. It is an institute that has been built on a strong foundation of selfless commitment and diligence from its members; mostly on the basis of volunteerism. It caters for a large membership drawn from the Southern African region and across the world and thus, being a leader of such an institute is both a big honour and a privilege. I had the honour and privilege of serving the SAIMM as the first black woman President during the 2017/2018 term. I will always remember my time as the leader of the Institute with very fond memories.

The 2017/2018 financial year was characterised by a number of activities and initiatives organised by the Institute and supported by a slowly recovering global mining industry. The SAIMM continued to implement strict measures to absorb as much of the financial impact on its operating costs, as possible. However, the Institute also continued to recognise that the needs of its members always come first and did not compromise on the quality of service offered to them. For the first time in over three years, the Institute started to show signs of financial recovery; this being attributed to the hard work and commitment of the SAIMM staff and conference teams.

My term of office was also characterised by a period of SAIMM self-reflection. This was mainly driven by the awareness of the changes in the mining and mineral landscape as the traditional big corporates that had driven the mining industry for decades downsized or changed their approach and focus in the field. New smaller and previously unrecognised junior miners also emerged. The Institute became cognisant of the fact that for it to remain relevant and aligned to the needs of its members and the changing industry, a new strategy for the future was necessary. The SAIMM Office Bearers, on a mandate from the Council, held a number of facilitated strategy planning sessions with the outcome being a vision for the Institute and a number of work

streams, which seek to support the vision and the future performance and positioning of the Institute.

Another highlight during this period was the advancement of the SAIMM Journal into the digital world. This included the introduction of the Open Journal System (OJS) for managing and reviewing the papers submitted for publication in the Journal. This brought the Journal on par with international standards and allowed the submission and reviewing process to be much more efficient and easier for both the authors and the reviewers. In the same period, the Journal was indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), which helped the Institute and its members to benefit through increased dissemination of published papers and better visibility for the authors.

Being a woman President is a role that cannot be taken lightly. It's a role that inspires and motivates all the female professionals working in an environment that has traditionally been male dominated. As such, the issue of the challenges faced by women in the industry was bound to come into the forefront. This topic will likely continue to be of interest for many more years to come. This is because although the mining industry has made significant steps towards the inclusion of women and the role they play in the sector, women still face many challenges. During my term as the President and in recognition of a need from our members, we established the Committee for Diversity and Inclusion in the Minerals Industry (DIMI). The objectives of the committee are to advance diversity (gender, ethnicity, religion and or other diversifying factors) and inclusion in the industry through initiatives and activities that address the professional needs and aspirations of persons actively pursuing a career in the minerals industry. The idea is to bring awareness to the mining industry on the importance of valuing the contributions brought by diverse individuals.

On the home front, after a couple of years of unrest at universities, the South African government announced a free education dispensation for students at institutions of higher learning. Students warmly welcomed this

dispensation and flooded universities with applications in order to gain skills that would form the foundation of their careers. On the other hand, institutions and other members of the public received the same dispensation with concern, mostly about, its sustainability. Still on the education front, the advent of big-data technologies, the Industrial Internet of Things or the fourth industrial revolution, prompted questions of whether the mining and metallurgical graduates from the institutes of higher learning were geared for the changes that are inevitable in the industry that they would serve. Technological innovations and disruptors, for example robotics, self-driven cars, and virtual assistants emerging at a rapid pace, are being seen as a competitor for some of the traditional mining and metallurgical career roles, while new jobs that currently do not yet exist are yet to be created. The challenge then becomes the preparation for, and the development of skills for, career roles that will exist only in the future. All this pointed to the institutes of learning and the mining industry needing to be conscious of the fact that it was not a case of 'business as usual' any more. A new level of system thinking is required to ensure that the industry is not blindsided by the future.

Although the SAIMM offices have been housed at the Chamber of Mines building for a long time, no close ties had previously existed between the two organisations. The Institute embarked on discussions to foster close ties with the Chamber with a view of a partnership that could leverage the position of the Chamber in the mining industry for the benefit of SAIMM members. At the same time, while the debate on the possibility of relocating the SAIMM offices to a new location continued within the SAIMM Council, the Chamber of Mines South Africa rebranded itself as Minerals Council South Africa. This rebranding was done with the aim of moving the organisation from the historic issues that did not reflect or meet their mandate of repositioning South Africa's mining industry and making

mining the country's most prominent sector. The rebranding therefore, represented an opportunity to recalibrate the former Chamber brand and ensure that it was relevant and rejuvenated to reflect a new mining era and dispensation; one of inclusiveness, shared value, and a future that all South Africans could benefit from and be proud of.

The proposed new Mining Charter also continued to dominate the industry. The sweeping changes in the political front, with the changes in the leadership of the country from President Jacob Zuma to President Cyril Ramaphosa, brought renewed hope that engagements with the Government would see new developments in this regard. The Presidency announced its commitment to resolving the impasse on the Mining Charter and facilitating

a process of developing a Charter inclusive of all stakeholders, and in the interests of the industry and the country as a whole. In the words of the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, 'By working together in a genuine partnership underscored by trust and shared vision, I am certain we will be able to resolve the current impasse and agree on a Charter that both accelerates transformation and grows the vital sector of our economy'. The words of the President also highlighted that the mining industry needs stakeholders who are not only committed to the vision of the future, but who also work together to establish a stronger, more competitive, more resilient and prosperous industry.

The value of the Institute as a home for professionals in the minerals industry cannot be underrated. As the Institute turns 125 years old, it remains young, vibrant, active and strong. It continues to be dynamic and forward-looking. The source of its strength remains in its members; members who selflessly participate at all levels as well as leaders of the Institute who dedicate enormous effort and time to ensure that the values and missions of the Institute are kept alive. I have no doubt that we will still see another successful 125 years. This Institute is a gift and a legacy to our children. *



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**SAIMM CONGRATULATIONS
FROM WITS CHMT**

The School of Chemical and Metallurgical Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand congratulates the SAIMM on its milestone 125th anniversary. The School has had a long association with SAIMM through several of its staff members and alumni being presidents and office bearers throughout the history of the SAIMM. Names like Prof. G.H. Stanley, first professor in Metallurgy at Wits (1905-1939), other HoDs like Prof. D.D. Howat and R.P. King, as well as the well-known Prof. R.E. Robinson, come to mind. The School most recently produced the SAIMM's first black female and only second female president of SAIMM, Prof. Selo Ndlovu.

We wish the SAIMM all the best for the future and the important role it plays in the industry and professions associated with it, and assure the SAIMM of our continued strong support in future.