



President: 2016-2017

'I am confident that the SAIMM will survive and thrive in the next 100 years'

Cuthbert Musingwini

I am confident that the SAIMM will survive and thrive in the next 100 years and continue to be a great organisation.

It is always easy to reminisce about the past, but it can be quite a daunting challenge to envisage what is likely to happen in the future. The journey of the SAIMM started in 1894 but much has transpired since then. Past Presidents of the institute have come and gone, but the Institute has remained steadfast. If each President's tenure is plotted on the historical timeline of the Institute, each tenure would appear as a mere dot along that timeline. However, these dots connect in a special way. The connection is in the SAIMM's leadership strategy, which ensures continuity from one President to the next, and each President selflessly executes a collective strategy during his or her tenure. This is the DNA behind SAIMM being effective as a professional organization, which has ensured its existence for 125 years. It is this DNA which will ensure that the SAIMM will outlive the next century.

I had the privilege of serving the SAIMM as President during the 2016/2017 financial year when I succeeded Professor Rodney Jones. I had previously served the SAIMM as its first black Honorary Treasurer for the two financial years, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. I can now reminisce about the past, despite my tenure being just a dot on the SAIMM's historical timeline.

My term of office was characterized by the continued economic challenges experienced by the global mining industry post the global financial crisis (GFC) of mid-2008. Due to continued depressed commodity prices that slumped on the onset of the GFC, the South African mining industry experienced job losses. The post-GFC period led to some mines either closing or put on care and maintenance. As with other kindred professional organizations within the minerals sector, the SAIMM also bore the brunt of the economic downturn as some of our members were sadly retrenched and consequently, could not afford to pay their membership fees nor

attend conferences organized by the SAIMM. As a caring organization, the SAIMM assisted its members in financial distress to retain their membership. Despite this challenge, we were able to surpass our target of reaching 5000 members by 2020, due to amongst other initiatives, our Membership Incentive Programme in which members receive a series of benefits. Our membership distribution remained at approximately 90% of members residing within the Southern African region.

Despite the economic downturn, we managed to turn around our fortunes during the 2016/2017 financial year. The deficit of *circa* R6 million reported for the 2015/2016 financial year was reduced greatly in the 2016/2017

financial year to around R63 thousand, mainly due to the austerity measures we implemented to keep the institute financially afloat and survive the short term in order to thrive in the long term.

Another highlight during my term pertains to the prestigious SAIMM Journal. The Journal's impact factor improved by about 26.5%, indicating that as an institute our strategy of publishing more papers of a higher quality was paying dividends. The

dual electronic and hard copy distribution of the Journal was continued with the hope of gradually phasing out hard copy distribution of the Journal in line with the institute's strategy of becoming totally digital in line with the 4th Industrial Revolution developments, and becoming open access with our technical publications.

The SAIMM continued with its support for the Young Professionals Council (YPC), which has been delivering positive outcomes. This ensures that the future of the SAIMM is secured by tapping into the generation of the younger professionals within SAIMM who will continue to build the on the SAIMM's legacy going forward. The SAIMM continued its support for regional branches to ensure growth of the SAIMM's footprint within the

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country and regionally within southern Africa.

Locally, the SAIMM maintained its interaction with kindred professional associations within the South African minerals industry. Internationally, the SAIMM maintained its participation in the Global Mineral Professionals Alliance (GMPA), which culminated in the strengthening of this international collaboration by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February 2017, at the GMPA annual general meeting hosted by the SAIMM in Cape Town. The GMPA comprises the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (AusIMM), the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum (CIM), the Institute of Materials, Mining and Metallurgy (IOM³), the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (SAIMM), the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration Inc. (SME), and the Instituto de Ingenieros de Minas del Peru (IIMP). The picture below is that of representatives of the GMPA member countries present at the MoU signing ceremony.

The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) is the statutory body in South Africa mandated with registering engineering professionals, while Voluntary Associations (VAs) such as the SAIMM are there to serve the interests

of their members. ECSA and VAs have historically co-existed and enjoyed a symbiotic relationship. However, as it sometimes happens in history, relationships occasionally go through challenges, often coming out stronger. During my term of office, seven VAs, including the SAIMM with support from the SAIMM council, took ECSA to court to challenge the legitimacy of the new ECSA Council as there were alleged irregularities in the appointment of the Council in September 2016. At the time of writing this article the matter had not yet been concluded by the courts, but it is my desire that the relationship between ECSA and VAs (including the SAIMM) will be resolved amicably.

All I have said is in the past. So, what does the future hold for the SAIMM? It is a matter of crystal ball gazing. I am confident that the SAIMM will survive and thrive in the next 100 years and continue to be a great organization. This possibility is underpinned by initiatives that the SAIMM is pursuing. These include the YPC, Membership Incentive Programme, support of regional branches, digital transformation, and the more recent rebranding initiative. Only time will be the judge of my optimistic future perspective of the SAIMM. ✱

**GMPA (GLOBAL MINERAL PROFESSIONALS ALLIANCE), 3 FEBRUARY 2017,
SOMERSET WEST, SOUTH AFRICA**



Left to right: President, CIM, Michael Winship; President, SAIMM, Cuthbert Musingwini; President, IIMP, Antonio Samaniego; Manager, SAIMM, Samada Moolla; President, SME, Timothy Arnold; Chief Executive, AusIMM, Miriam Way; President, IOM³, Martin Cox; Executive Director, SME, Dave Kanagy; Past President, SAIMM, Rodney Jones