

## Celebrating Ethical Leaders

*'The first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings.'* – Albert Schweitzer

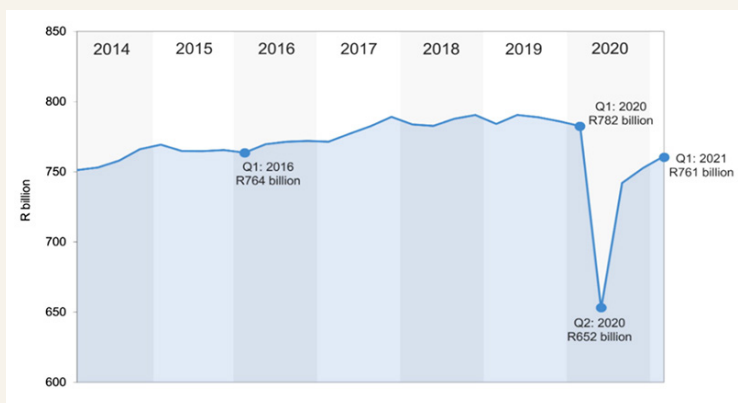


A year ago, I presented on the importance of ethical behaviour and ethical leadership at the Annual General Meeting. I believed this to be particularly relevant, given that South Africans often find themselves in positions of uncertainty and insecurity in our volatile political, economic and social environment.

In light of the recent unrest, and prior to ending my term as President of the SAIMM, I feel it necessary to again emphasise the importance of ethical leadership in the South African context.

July witnessed a tragic development in the political arena. Stores were ransacked and destroyed by people displaying callous attitudes that confirmed the divisions within our political mix. This unrest also exposed the extent of the ever-increasing wealth gaps across South African society. For many hard-working individuals, the immediate effect was immense, with shop owners and assistants losing everything, and in some cases even their lives. None of us were completely unaffected by the fear and uncertainty that gripped the nation.

Unemployment is reported at 32.6%, but the reality is that many more people are without work. Our GDP figures indicate little to no real growth since 2014 in 2010 terms (see graph). Our country was already in a precarious economic situation prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequently, approximately half a million more people lost their jobs as a consequence of the hard lockdown. This has worsened the degree of wealth inequality between social classes and there is evidence of a rise in domestic violence.



**Real GDP (constant 2010 prices, seasonally adjusted). Source: Stats SA - Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**

The political, economic, and social situation in South Africa requires strong intervention if we are to strengthen our global standing, and more importantly, if we are to increase ethical awareness and solidarity among communities.

It is within this context that I need to express how proud I am to be South African. Our country witnessed an inspiring coming-together of communities seeking to help one another, and where necessary, to protect their local stores from looters. Many

caring, honest, and respectful individuals simply connected with people to do what they truly believed to be right – opposing ethical violations.

In addition, we have seen how leaders in our minerals industry, despite having to navigate numerous challenges over recent years, have remained steadfast in their commitment to promoting diversity and inclusivity in the workplace, while also supporting their employees, local communities, and our country. Decisive actions have resulted in positive and meaningful progress on important matters outside of the immediate business of making profits. The timely implementation of much-needed vaccination programmes is one good example.

There are clearly many individuals in our country who have integrity and are able to display ethical leadership. They inspire a sense of community and team spirit within our businesses and our communities.

The South African government can be comforted by the fact that it has the support of the people directing the fortunes of our minerals industry. I believe that we have been tested again over the past month, and that we will once more emerge as a much stronger and more resilient democracy on the other side.

**V.G. Duke**  
President, SAIMM