



Reflections on 2023



The mining industry in South Africa faced significant challenges in 2023. The robust economic recovery post-COVID that had led to impressive returns for mining companies in 2022 did not continue. In 2023 there was a general decline in revenue and profits across the industry, with the notable exception of gold miners. Volatility in commodity prices emerged as a major disruptive force, impacting the sector as a whole.

Platinum companies, the main contributors to industry revenue, bore the brunt of the challenges, grappling with a substantial reduction in platinum group metal (PGM) basket prices. While the depreciation of the South African rand offered some relief, this advantage was offset by escalating import costs. The industry contended with additional hurdles, including persistent electricity supply challenges (load shedding), logistical constraints, a shortage of essential skills, and the ongoing issue of illegal mining activities. These factors played a significant role in driving down overall returns for the South African mining industry.

Despite these challenges, our mining industry continued to embrace technological advancements and digitalization efforts. This focus on innovation could lead to increased efficiency, reduced operational costs, and enhanced sustainability, positioning the industry for long-term success. The industry also demonstrated an increased commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices, acknowledging the importance of responsible and sustainable mining.

The SAIMM was engaged in a diverse array of events during 2023, showcasing its commitment to knowledge-sharing and professional development. The Institute successfully hosted a total of 14 conferences, 15 webinars, four short courses, two branch events, and two book launches. Furthermore, the SAIMM expanded its communication channels by introducing a podcast platform known as 'The Crucible'. Over the course of the year, the Institute used this platform to present six podcasts.

The events and activities organized by the SAIMM spanned a broad spectrum of subjects, including the crucial technical aspects of mining and metallurgy and wider themes pertinent to the industry. The topics covered incorporated discussions on ESG, mine closure strategies, and the ongoing process of digitalization. The Institute also highlighted its dedication to promoting diversity and inclusion within the sector. This comprehensive approach demonstrates the SAIMM's recognition of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in the field and contributes significantly to the enrichment of industry knowledge and practices.

I would like to personally thank our members who organized and participated in these events. The success of these activities is a testament to their commitment to the needs and demands of the minerals industry. The establishment of these platforms for people to engage and discuss important issues is essential for the future of our industry.

I trust that our members have had the opportunity to enjoy a well-deserved break over the festive season. As we embark on the challenges of 2024, I hope you feel recharged and ready to face the opportunities and endeavours that lie ahead.

Wishing you all a prosperous and fulfilling year ahead.

W.C. Joughin
President, SAIMM