



PGMs: Enabling a cleaner world, and sustaining industrial capability



This PGM-focused edition of the SAIMM Journal is particularly meaningful for me. From 27–29 October 2025, I had the privilege of opening the 9th International PGM Conference, hosted by the Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy at Sun City. Having attended this conference for more than 14 years as both a delegate and speaker, and having previously served as Chairperson of the 8th International PGM Conference, returning last year as SAIMM President to open the event was both personally and professionally significant.

The conference theme, *PGMs, Enabling a Cleaner World*, was highly relevant. With more than 300 delegates, this was the largest PGM Conference to date, underscoring the continued global importance of PGMs in emissions reduction, clean energy technologies, and emerging industrial applications, even amid challenging market conditions.

As expected, the quality of keynote addresses and technical presentations was exceptionally high. The programme spanned the full PGM value chain, from geology, mining and processing through to market dynamics, technology evolution and emerging applications, while engaging candidly with structural pressures such as cost escalation, energy constraints, operational risk, and market volatility.

The conference coincided with an important inflection point in PGM markets. After an extended period of price pressure, platinum prices had already begun a meaningful recovery by late October 2025. These market dynamics were addressed in the opening presentation, *PGM Supply and Demand Outlook*, delivered by Henk de Hoop, Managing Director of SFA (Oxford), who highlighted tightening supply fundamentals, sensitivity to modest demand shifts, and the growing influence of China's buying behaviour in supporting price momentum.

One keynote was particularly impactful from a South African perspective. "Two metals, one mine: Unpacking the market dynamics linking chromium and PGMs in a South African context," delivered by T.G. Schultz and M. Mapiiloko of Project Blue, highlighted how sustained electricity cost increases have fundamentally eroded the competitiveness of South Africa's ferrochrome industry. Industry data presented showed that a combination of smelter and furnace closures and long-term suspensions, with over a dozen facilities having been closed or curtailed, has resulted in a substantial loss of ferrochrome capacity nationally and massive job losses, as chrome ore is increasingly exported without local beneficiation, particularly to China.

As part of SAIMM's value strategy to develop young professionals and strengthen the pipeline, ten university students were sponsored to attend the conference. My engagement with these students during the conference reinforced the value of early exposure to industry, technology and leadership. Our strategy is to replicate this approach more deliberately, enabling sponsored students to attend SAIMM technical events as part of strengthening the future skills and leadership pipeline.

In support of this objective, four members of the management team from the Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA) attended the conference, providing an opportunity to demonstrate SAIMM's value proposition in professional development and industry-aligned skills building.

What stood out throughout the conference was the resilience and depth of capability within the PGM sector. This is an industry accustomed to operating under constraints, yet it continues to innovate and adapt through cycles, underpinned by strong technical foundations and professional expertise.

For SAIMM, conferences such as the International PGM Conference reaffirm our role as a neutral professional platform that convenes expertise, enables rigorous technical debate, and supports continuing professional development across generations. I commend the organising committee, authors, presenters, and delegates on delivering an outstanding event. We are also grateful for the continued support of our sponsors and exhibitors.

PGMs will continue to play a critical role in enabling a cleaner and more sustainable world. Ensuring that South Africa remains a competitive and responsible participant in that future will depend on disciplined leadership, sound policy choices, and sustained investment in people and professional capacity and capability.

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