

Mantashe promises Mining Charter soon

The Department of Mineral Resources is working towards finalising the Mining Charter after receiving input from stakeholders in the industry, Minister Gwede Mantashe told journalists shortly after tabling the department's Budget Vote speech in the National Assembly.



Mineral Resources Minister, Gwede Mantashe

“On the legislative amendments, we want to finalise the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA), which is with the National Council of Provinces.

“We want to finalise the Mining Charter... We are engaging with the industry, the unions and communities. We have visited seven mining regions up to now. We are left with four regions - one is being done this weekend.

“After that, we can consolidate the [inputs] that have been collected and after that, we can finalise the Mining Charter,” he said.

Addressing MPs during the Budget Vote debate earlier in the day, Mantashe said rebuilding the levels of trust and confidence in the sector is paramount to return the country to the business of mining.

“We are investing time and effort to rebuild relationships and trust with our primary clients: business, labour and communities. Frank and open discussions with our stakeholders will enable us to serve them better.

“We also encourage all stakeholders to talk among themselves so that even in cases of disagreements, it must be on substantive issues, not because of a trust deficit,” he said.

In line with the call by President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Mineral Resources Department has intensified engagements on the Mining Charter.

“The Mining Charter, which is a tool for transformation, is a powerful pact between all stakeholders to contribute towards the achievement of an equal, non-racial and non-sexist society envisioned in our Constitution.”

He said the department plans to hold a summit on the Mining Charter at the end of the consultation process to test it to the people who were consulted and to redraft it before it gets published.

“We aim to finalise and gazette the Mining Charter in June, having taken on board inputs and concerns from stakeholders across the country.

“Thus far, we have held consultations in five provinces where mining and labour-sending areas are situated,” he said.

Mining for the future

The minister said the department has also established a task team, comprising all social partners, to develop a coherent vision for a competitive and sustainable industry.

He said the mining sector must increase its contribution to the GDP of the country and operate optimally for the benefit of society.

“If production is consistently disrupted, capacity to deliver is also disrupted, hence the importance of the department and individual mines engaging mining communities and workers so that all stakeholders are part of and appreciate developments in the sector,” he said.

The Mineral Resources Department is in the process of reviewing the housing and living conditions standards, which are developed in terms of Section 100 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA).

He said the review seeks to address the historic and systematic policies of discrimination and marginalisation of mineworkers in terms of their working, housing and living conditions, and to provide for the progressive realisation and protection of their basic constitutional right to human dignity through provision of adequate access to housing, better living conditions and related amenities.

“The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Amendment Bill, 2013 (MPRDA Bill) is before the National Council of Provinces. Eight of the nine Provincial Legislatures supported the bill in the negotiating mandates process.

“The department has provided responses to the Provincial Legislatures negotiating mandates and the committee is currently negotiating and voting on the mandates.

“Once the Select Committee on Land and Mineral Resources has finalised the mandates, it will compile its report and recommend to the National Assembly for further processing of the Bill.

“We urge Parliament to proceed faster towards finalisation of this bill because it is key in entrenching regulatory and policy certainty necessary for investment, thereby attainment of sustainable growth, development and transformation in the sector,” he said.

Corruption in licensing

Mantashe said issues faced in mine licensing, including corruption, declined prospecting rights, unprocessed applications and unexplained red tape, must be dealt with to grow the economy.

He said this hurdle must be overcome to ensure that prospectors can prospect and those with the legal permits and the means to mine are able to mine.

He said the successful development of mineral resources has the potential to transform the national energy economy of South Africa.

“To that end, we intend to move with speed to fast-track the finalisation of exploration rights applications so that South Africa can maximise its chances of reaping the benefits from shale gas exploration and exploitation,” he said.

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