

Minister endorses geoscience expertise for the development of Africa

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IT IS unjustifiable to sustain an economic model that places the African continent at the bottom quartile of development despite its natural resources endowment spanning land, minerals and upstream petroleum, Mineral Resources Minister Mosebenzi Zwane said.

Zwane spoke at the opening

of the 35th International Geological Congress (IGC) taking place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre until September 4. More than 4 000 delegates, from 115 countries are in attendance.

Zwane noted the evolution of earth science in South Africa since the last occasion of the IGC held in South Africa in 1929. However, Africa's geo-

scientific knowledge lags significantly compared with other continents.

Geoscientific knowledge is key to reducing the impact of hazards and other disasters, and could contribute to finding alternative sources of energy in an energy-scarce continent such as Africa, Zwane said.

"The collective brainpower herein gathered is called upon

to emerge at the end of the conference with a developmentally focused programme of action, with a bias towards the African continent."

Zwane said an investigation reports that Africa loses in excess of \$50 billion (R719.59bn) a year through practices of "base erosion and profit-shifting", popularly known as transfer pricing.

Accordingly, implementation of appropriate technology for quality control and assurance on mineral exports becomes an urgent need to curb this practice that grossly undermines the socio-economic development imperatives of affected nations, Zwane said.

"The importance of geoscience to serve the needs

of humanity cannot be overstated. Broadly, this prominence is aptly captured in the three core topics specifically delineated for this conference, namely: geoscience in society, in the economy and fundamental geoscience," he said.

Geological Society of South Africa executive manager and IGC finance chairman Craig Smith said: "The meeting is

the flagship event of the International Union of Geological Sciences, and covers the full range of earth science disciplines.

"The key themes of the Cape Town meeting are geoscience in society, geoscience in the economy and fundamental geoscience, aimed at reporting technical advances in research into the earth sciences.

"The real value of the meeting is technical networking within a global 'community of practice'," he said.

The IGC conferences are staged every four years at a major city in the world, but the last one hosted by South Africa was in 1929 in Pretoria. The only other Africa meeting was in Algeria in 1952.

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