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RESPONSE ON THE PLANNED RETRENCHMENTS AT IMPALA PLATINUM MINES, RUSTENBURG

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Impala Platinum Mines, a subsidiary of IMPLATS, opened its first mining shafts in around 1968 on land claimed by communities forming the Bafokeng Traditional Community. Under the leadership and authority of the Bafokeng chieftaincy, Implats has since opened more than 18 Shafts surrounding the village of Luka. It is off this land that Implats was dubbed the second highest platinum producer in the world.

Ironically, the abovementioned 20 000 strong village of Luka, has never enjoyed the proceeds from mining development on their land. The immeasurable cost and damage of Impala's operations on the local environment and the Luka community as a whole is well documented.

It is against this backdrop that the communities of Luka and Maile lodged in February 2014, a formal appeal with the Minister of Mineral Resources against the renewal of Impala's mining license, due then for expiry in 2018.

Despite above formal appeal and a commitment by the Minister to investigate the grounds of appeal, no investigations were ever conducted, and no further response on the appeal furnished.

AMCU has enjoyed the dominant majority labour union at Impala (Luka). Over 5 000 of AMCU members reside in backyard dwellings rented in Luka village. It is said the ANC would have lost the two wards in Luka in the last Local Government elections had the EFF not given up on pursuing vote-rigging allegations against ANC registered at the time. Luka community, together with AMCU members had voted the ANC out of power in mine-hosting villages forming Bafokeng.

It is no secret that AMCU dominance in mining companies operating on Bafokeng land is despised by local ANC and certain captured senior Bafokeng executives. It is clear AMCU will lose its majority status and membership favour at Impala, and will have many of its members resigning or their jobs unlawfully terminated.

The abovementioned retrenchments are nothing else but an ill-informed political ploy by the ANC and monopoly capital to weaken EFF performance at the next elections.

It would further be interesting to know if Impala's mining license has been renewed without our community consent, and despite above objections. It would be very interesting to know what the economic projections in Impala's application for mining license renewal are, and whether Impala was granted a renewal on false promises of economic growth and job creation.

It is our considered view that the current low prices on Platinum Group Metals are manipulated, possibly as a veiled attack on progressive labour forces in this country, and in response to the broader radical transformation agenda unfolding in the country.

We hope the left forces in this country: Communities, CBOs, the EFF, NUMSA and AMCU will find each other in response to these senseless retrenchments, and in ensuring that jobs and affected local economies are saved, and the final demise of imperialist economic terrorism in this country.

EXTRACT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF BAFOKENG LAND BUYERS' ASSOCIATION

Whereas the struggle for the recognition of the land rights of the Bafokeng community and many of the communities within Bafokeng goes back to the time when their ancestors were dispossessed by colonialism and apartheid; and

Whereas this struggle has always included the struggle for rights in the land as well as for the equitable distribution of the economic benefits derived from the land and its minerals; and

Whereas the land and its wealth is now controlled by the Bafokeng tribal authority in a manner that fails to recognise the historical claims of the land buyer communities within Bafokeng, and also fails to recognise the entitlement of the Bafokeng people to a fair and accountable distribution of the wealth generated by the land; and

Whereas many members of the Bafokeng community have been active since 1906 in the quest for a land dispensation in respect of the land on which they live that recognises the legitimate claims of the descendants of those people who paid for the original land purchases, and that creates a constitutionally acceptable framework for the ownership and control over the land; and

In defence of their economic, environmental, land, and human rights, often at odds against the mining conglomerates operating within and with the blessing of the Bafokeng Tribal Authority:

1. Aims and objectives

- 1.1. To promote the legitimate claims of descendants of land buyers in the Bafokeng community.
- 1.2. To promote the equitable enjoyment of land rights and appropriate upgrade of tenure for all the people living on the land of the Bafokeng and its constituent communities. And to further promote the equitable distribution of benefits derived from the land among all those communities that live on the land.
- 1.3. To transform the administration and control of land on which the Bafokeng communities live into a dispensation that is constitutionally acceptable and that is based on the wishes of the members of the Bafokeng communities.
- 1.4. To promote similar objectives within other communities that are similarly placed and to co-operate with other civil society organisations with similar goals.
- 1.5. To defend and advocate for economic, environmental, land and human rights justice for its members and the Bafokeng community in general.
- 1.6. To develop campaigns for the promotion and defence of policies and actions in pursuit of these objectives.
- 1.7. To maximise the production of the land and its resources in a sustainable manner for the benefit of the communities that live on the land.
- 1.8. To achieve law reform through means of advocacy, litigation and research.