

## **Stronger together: Partnerships will transform Africa's mining sector**

Africa's mining sector stands at a crossroads. With its vast mineral reserves, the continent possesses the resources to power the next phase of development for the continent and the globe. Given robust debate around which minerals will be most important to fuel that development, there is renewed interest in Africa from across the world.

Unlocking this potential requires more than resource extraction – it demands a collective effort from governments, private-sector players, downstream buyers, communities and civil society.

The 2026 Investing in African Mining Indaba (MI26) theme, **“Stronger together: Progress through partnerships”** highlights the transformative power of collaboration in addressing the sector's challenges and opportunities.

MI26 is a pivotal event for mining professionals, investors, and industry leaders looking to capitalise on the vast opportunities in Africa's mining sector. Mining Indaba 2026 comes at a crucial time for Africa, as it maps the role it will play in the global economy.

The conference theme is powerfully expressed in the visual identity for MI26, with a fingerprint motif representing the human component of the industry and underscoring the need for collaboration across the sector.

Frans Baleni, chairman of the Mining Indaba executive advisory board, explains that this year's theme aligns with the South African philosophy of ubuntu - a belief in a shared, essential humanism.

“Ubuntu holds that unity is strength – that when we work together, we craft a better future. This is fundamentally true. By collaborating, we can shape outcomes for the betterment of all stakeholders - and the environment.”

This was echoed by Gwede Mantashe, South Africa's Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources. “Our strength lies in building partnerships that recognise the mutual value of investment. We understand that investors seek returns, and rightly so, but we are equally committed to ensuring that the benefits of growth and development are shared with workers, communities, and the country at large. Progress is only meaningful when it lifts all stakeholders,” he said.

## **Community-centric mining: A new paradigm**

One of the most significant shifts in Africa's mining landscape has been the recognition of the need to involve indigenous and local communities. Historically sidelined, these groups now have a seat at the table, as stakeholders, beneficiaries and equal partners. This shift is forcing mining companies to adopt more sustainable and community-centric approaches.

Dr Marit Kitaw, economic affairs officer at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, calls for a reimagining of the way that the continent's mineral bounty can be developed, so that it benefits a wider range of stakeholders.

"The theme 'Stronger together: Progress through partnerships' is a call to reimagine partnerships on Africa's growth journey, to see minerals not as tools of convenience, but as instruments of collective empowerment," she says. "Africa's transformation through minerals can only be achieved when everyone, including women, youth, marginalised communities, artisanal miners, governments, industry, civil society, academia, and cooperating partners, sit at the table as equal partners. Stronger together, we rise!"

By fostering mutual respect, transparent dialogue, and inclusive decision-making, mining operations can ensure that local communities benefit from resource development while preserving cultural heritage and environmental integrity. From skills sharing and job creation to improving livelihoods and empowering indigenous voices, this new paradigm recognises that mining success must extend beyond production outputs to include shared prosperity and social equity.

Mzila Mthenjane, CEO of the Minerals Council South Africa, emphasises the role of collaboration in driving growth.

"The South African mining sector is positively impactful, but even more so in collaboration with government and other social partners," he says. "The sector is poised for growth and will enable the investment and development of key infrastructure that supports livelihoods and economic growth."

## **Defining critical minerals**

A crucial global debate is underway around the idea of critical minerals – resources deemed strategically important for economic, technological, or developmental reasons.

Precisely which minerals are critical varies according to national interests. For Africa, its reserves of [iron ore](#) and gold see it well placed to power infrastructure and technology development as well as financial markets. According to the [United Nations](#), the continent has 40% of the world's gold and up to 90% of its chromium and platinum.

The continent also holds around [55%](#) of global reserves of cobalt – a major input in batteries for electric vehicles, smartphones and laptops. DRC accounts for 70% of global production.

However, to maximise the benefits of these resources, Africa must move beyond exporting raw materials to developing local beneficiation and refining capabilities.

Tony Carroll, a member of the Mining Indaba Executive Advisory Board, advocates for a strategic pivot.

"We can no longer operate as before," he says. "Neither bulk exports of unrefined ore nor export bans are durable solutions. The industry has to pivot toward practices that provide more value and technology transfer in African nations. This transition will be aided by the introduction of more nimble and economically viable refining technologies and the provision of supportive infrastructure via public-private partnerships."

This shift will require governments, investors, and mining companies to work together to develop industrial hubs, reliable transport networks, and energy systems that support local processing and manufacturing. By prioritising infrastructure and industrialisation, Africa can position itself as a leader in the global energy transition while ensuring that its mineral wealth benefits its people.

Kwasi Ampofo, Head of Mining and Metals at BloombergNEF, highlights the significance of collaboration in this context.

"'Stronger together: Progress through partnerships' means uniting governments, private sector, communities, and civil society to transform mining, achieving a shared triumph for Africa's future," he says.

### **Technology and sustainability: The way forward**

Innovation is another cornerstone of the 2026 Mining Indaba. From AI-driven exploration to digital-twin technology, the mining sector is embracing disruptive technologies to enhance efficiency, safety, and sustainability.

Laura Nicholson, content and communities director for Mining Indaba, stresses the importance of innovation.

"Investing in African Mining Indaba is a platform where transformative ideas and collaborations come to life," she says. "Our goal is to drive both investment and the kind of innovative technology partnerships that create shared prosperity."

Disruptive technologies also offer an opportunity to engage Africa's youth. By investing in skills training and education programmes around advanced mining technologies, the industry can create pathways for young people to lead the sector's transformation, building a resilient, future-ready workforce.

### **Governance and policy harmonisation**

Strong governance and harmonised policies are essential for a stable, attractive investment environment. When African governments unite, they unlock growth in mining and the broader economy. Harmonised regulations, better infrastructure

and responsible investment create a stable foundation, while international partnerships bring technology, funding and expertise to fast-track success.

Mantashe underscores the importance of aligning investment goals to build mutual value.

“Investors seek returns, and rightly so, but at the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, we are equally committed to ensuring that the benefits of growth and development are shared with workers, communities and the country at large. Progress is only meaningful when it lifts all stakeholders.”

### **Building Africa’s future together**

As the 2026 Mining Indaba approaches, it is clear that the future of African mining lies in partnerships. Whether it’s governments harmonising regulations, companies investing in communities, or innovators pushing technological boundaries, collaboration is the key to unlocking Africa’s full potential.

By fostering mutual respect, transparent dialogue and inclusive decision-making, the mining sector can ensure that Africa’s mineral wealth becomes a catalyst for justice, prosperity and dignity for all.

Investing In African Mining Indaba 2026, with its theme enjoining the industry to be **“Stronger Together”**, offers participants a golden opportunity to partner with industry stakeholders to unlock possibilities and strengthen the sector.

- Prospective delegates, exhibitors, sponsors and event partners can get involved in #MI26 and help to co-create the next phase of the sector’s evolution by visiting [miningindaba.com](https://miningindaba.com).