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Labour Movement Perspective on Breaking the Green Curse: Building a People-Centred Critical Minerals Alliance for Community-Led Governance, Inclusive Industrialisation and Beneficiation, and a Just Energy Transition in South Africa

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PAMOJA SOUTH AFRICA: national strategy planning workshop and official launch

- Labour Movement Perspective on Breaking the Green Curse: Building a People-Centred Critical Minerals Alliance for Community-Led Governance, Inclusive Industrialisation and Beneficiation, and a Just Energy Transition in South Africa.

- Presented by Matamela Michael Mulaudzi on the 27-28 August 2026 at Birchwood Hotel, Boksburg

BREAKING THE GREEN CURSE - #1

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION NEWS (WASHINGTON, D.C.) – CRITICAL MINERALS ARE STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT TO NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND ADVANCED MANUFACTURING, YET THEIR EXTRACTION AND PROCESSING CAN BE ASSOCIATED WITH SIGNIFICANT LABOUR RISKS, INCLUDING FORCED LABOUR AND CHILD LABOUR. THESE CONDITIONS NOT ONLY RAISE ETHICAL CONCERNS BUT CAN ALSO UNDERMINE SUPPLY CHAIN RELIABILITY AND DISTORT FAIR COMPETITION.

BREAKING THE GREEN CURSE - #2

THE GLOBAL LABOUR MOVEMENT VIEWS THE RAPID EXPANSION OF CRITICAL MINERALS MINING AS BOTH A VITAL ENGINE FOR THE GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION AND A SEVERE BATTLEGROUND FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. MAJOR BODIES LIKE THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC) AND INDUSTRIALL GLOBAL UNION ARGUE THAT A TRUE JUST TRANSITION IS IMPOSSIBLE IF RENEWABLE ENERGY RELIES ON THE EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

LABOUR MOVEMENT PERSPECTIVE

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT, CREATING A PEOPLE-CENTRED CRITICAL MINERALS ALLIANCE ENTAILS MAKING SURE THAT THE GLOBAL RUSH FOR GREEN TRANSITION MATERIALS LIKE COPPER, NICKEL, COBALT, AND LITHIUM DOES NOT REPEAT THE HISTORICAL CYCLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION, WORKER ABUSE, AND COLONIAL EXPLOITATION.

LABOR UNIONS STRONGLY OPPOSE THE TRADITIONAL COLONIAL MODEL OF EXTRACTION, WHERE RAW CRITICAL TRANSITION MINERALS (CTMS)—SUCH AS LITHIUM, COBALT, NICKEL, AND COPPER—ARE SHIPPED ABROAD FOR PROCESSING.

THE PAMOJA CRITICAL MINERALS ALLIANCE AND OTHER COALITIONS REFLECT THE LABOUR AND GRASSROOTS AGENDA, WHICH SEES WORKER SOLIDARITY AND COMMUNITY-LED GOVERNMENT AS COMPLEMENTARY ASPECTS OF ONE ANOTHER.

Core Pillars of the Labour Perspective

- **Decent Work and Rights**
- Throughout the crucial mineral value chain, demand decent wages, safe working conditions, freedom of association, and collective bargaining.
- Demand the elimination of child and forced labour and reject the informalisation of mining.
- **Local Beneficiation Over Raw Export**
- Reject the conventional approach, which views the Global South as nothing more than a raw material quarry (An open-surface location where non-metallic rocks, minerals, sand, and gravel are taken from the ground to feed the manufacturing, building, and infrastructure sectors)
- Promote domestic industrialisation, knowledge transfer, and local processing to generate long-term, high-quality jobs as opposed to transitory extraction labour.
- **Community and Worker Unity**
- Close the gap between the land/water defense struggles of rural and indigenous host communities and those of factories and mines.
- Consider the "Social License to Operate" as legally enforceable, community-enforced accountability rather than a corporate public relations checklist.
- **Another significant tool for improving labour standards and bolstering labour governance in international supply chains is trade agreements. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) offers technical support to nations putting these trade agreements' labour obligations into practice. Labour laws can promote fair competition, enhance working conditions, and strengthen compliance.**

LABOUR MOVEMENT DECLARATION

THERE CAN BE NO GREEN TRANSITION WITHOUT DECENT WORK. LABOUR MOVEMENT INSIST AND DEMAND PERMANENT CONTRACTS, LIVING WAGES, SECTOR-WIDE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND ENFORCEABLE SUPPLY-CHAIN ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WESTERN AND CHINESE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS.

Conclusion

- Inadequate enforcement of labour laws poses serious hazards to workers as well as businesses and governments looking to establish reliable sourcing agreements. To strengthen labour governance and reduce risks in vital mineral supply chains, the Internation Labour Organisation (ILO), governments, communities, employers, and workers must continue to collaborate.
- “Critical minerals must power African industrialisation and decarbonisation, support manufacturing industries and create jobs for the youth. Further, women in mining must be given licences and financial support to mine critical minerals,” said Rose Omamo, IndustriALL vice president and ITUC-Africa deputy president.
- The conclusion of this presentation acknowledges that while the essential minerals industry offers many chances to promote decent work, it also poses serious labour governance issues in several nations and supply chains.