

Bishop Jo Seoka
BASF-AGM, 3 May 2019, Mannheim/Germany

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to participate in your AGM. I am Johannes Seoka, former Bishop of the Anglican Church in Diocese of Pretoria in the Anglican Church of South Africa for 18 years. I am here representing and speaking on behalf of the Plough Back the Fruits Campaign constituted by South African, European and British network.

Last year Mr Bock cynically asked me not to come back this year. In fact, this is the major reason of being here today. I must say that though I was offended by his attitude, I decided to be forgiving and to be optimistic about our relationship for the sake of those who have entrusted me with the responsibility to speak on their behalf.

Chairperson, I now ask my interpreter to finish my challenge to you in the language most of us understand.

Dear Shareholders, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Management Board and the Supervisory Board, dear employees of BASF, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Isabelle Uhe, I am a member of the church relief organization charity Bread for the World, which has supported the concerns of the South African delegation from the very beginning. I will now present the speech of Bishop Seoka in German to you.

“This year we are here for the fifth time here at the Annual General Meeting in Mannheim with a delegation from South Africa on behalf of the international civic society campaign “Plough Back The Fruits” and speak on behalf of the workers in Marikana and their families. In Marikana are those mines, from which BASF obtains platinum, which is installed in catalyts.

For the past five years, we have been reporting on the unworthy inhumane living and working conditions in your platinum supply chain, about people whose salary is not enough to live on, let alone care for, families.

We told you about people who live in corrugated ironworks without electricity and water, as your contractor Lonmin still fails to meet its legal obligations to build houses and build infrastructure – not to mention the dignified treatment and fair compensation of those widows who lost their husbands in the Marikana massacre. In addition, many of the miners living there will lose their jobs soon after your platinum supplier Lonmin is taken over by Sibanye Stillwater. As a result of this acquisition, the second largest platinum producing group in the world will be created. BASF is still bigger 15 times that of Sibanye Stillwater.

We have always appealed to BASF to use its position as one of the largest chemical companies to send out a strong and clear message of change. For five years nothing has improved for the local people. In recent years, you’ ve been talking to Lonmin, joining initiatives, or even initiating initiatives in the platinum sector on-site, attending conferences and discussions, and engaging with civil society actors, as you put it on your website, but, in the end, nothing has resulted in real improvements for the women, men and children on the ground.

For many years now, we and the people of Marikana have been kept waiting. Marikana, the place where BASF procures 2 million Euros a day in Platinum, the place where 34 miners died in 2012 while protesting for better living and working conditions.

Nevertheless, we are here again, Mr. Bruder Müller, because we associate hope with you as the new CEO.

We hope for your support in the calls for a dignified life of people who mine the precious metal Platinum out of the African soil for you.

We hope that BASF will use the acquisition of your main supplier Lonmin by Sibanye Stillwater to establish transparent audits and monitor processes and re-set the supply chain relationship, for the better. A business relationship that can ensure what BASF is committed to. We hope you will support development secretary Mueller in his quest for protecting human rights in value chains. As a leading member of the Global Compact you surely want to be supportive of protecting human rights in business?

Especially now, as the public awareness is increasing and your neighbour France sets clear signs with its progressive law making for corporate responsibility. We hope that you will combine your quest to guarantee the supply of raw materials for Europe with the necessity to pay fairly for those. Only within a fair deal it can be ensured that the inequalities between North and South are reduced.

We appeal to you to honour your commitment to sustainable, responsible and fair business conduct along your supply chain. In this spirit of hope we are asking you:

With the take-over of Lonmin by Sibanye Stillwater we expect an acute exacerbation in health and safety of working conditions. What are you planning to do for the protection of miners and your own reputation?

How will you encourage Sibanye Stillwater to invest into improvements of working and living conditions in Marikana?

How will you supervise that Lonmin and Sibanye Stillwater will comply with the South African mining laws? Will you make the results of your reviews transparent?

Through the audits at Lonmin you aimed to contribute to the improvement of living and working conditions. When do you plan to publish the results of these audits to allow other stakeholders like us to review the implementation of the recommendations?

What was the turnaround between BASF and Lonmin during the last business year? Will you join Daimler and plead for binding compliance with rules and human rights standards in the supply chain?

We appeal to you to take action, not to tolerate the dangerous working conditions, but to make it possible for the people who work for your corporation to mine the central raw material platinum to live a dignified life. Do justice to your claimed role of leadership, and do lead in matters of sustainability and social responsibility of companies.

Many of the shareholders present here rely on you – we do hope, together with the people of Marikana.