

MEDIA STATEMENT 4

10 February 2016 at 9:00

Statement from Vantage Goldfields on the collapse of ground at its Lily Mine near Barberton:

No further communication overnight from container as search and rescue operations at Lily Mine continue and huge rocks frustrate extraction efforts

Sophisticated electro-magnetic technology identified that the container with three missing employees is 12 metres away; desperate rescue efforts enter the 'Red Zone' with time running out for any survivors of Friday's disaster

Search and rescue teams assembled from around South Africa are approaching 120 hours of continuous operations to remove thousands of tons of rocks that still surround the steel container hopefully containing three employees who have been missing since the collapse of the crown pillar at the Lily Gold Mine on Friday morning.

Ms Pretty Mabuza, Mr Solomon Nyarenda and Ms Yvonne Mnisi were working in the lamp room above surface when a 100-metre long sinkhole opened with no warning, sending their steel container office plunging tens of metres beneath thousands of tons of rock and other debris.

All 87 employees who had been working underground when the sinkhole caused a massive fall of ground into the mine, were safely brought to the surface without any injuries on Friday. Lily Mine has been fatality-free since operations started there 16 years ago, and there are no indications as yet as to how the thick, solid rock crown pillar could have suddenly collapsed.

The head of South Africa's Mine Rescue Services is on site and coordinating the search efforts of the multiple rescue teams from around the country at the mine near Barberton, Mpumalanga. Rescue teams detected some signs of life throughout rescue operations on Tuesday, but the audible signalling from the container has not been heard since.

The rescue teams refer to the Red Zone as the period when it becomes physiologically unlikely that survivors would be able to survive without adequate oxygen, water and other-life sustaining elements.

"It is incredibly frustrating and disappointing to possibly be less than 12 metres away from the container, but still potentially many hours away from reaching our target," said Mike McChesney, CEO of Vantage Goldfields. "Some of the rocks that need to be extracted are more than twice the size of a large off-road vehicle, and have to be carefully drilled and blasted to try and avoid any negative impact on the container and our three colleagues who remain trapped inside of what's left of that structure."

The mine is accommodating some 60 loved ones of the missing employees on site, and they are being regularly updated on progress with the search and rescue efforts.

"One cannot even begin to imagine what any survivors must be enduring, and our prayers and rescue efforts continue relentlessly and unceasingly. The support from all stakeholders –

government, the union, community, and the loved ones of our three missing colleagues – has been totally humbling,” said McChesney.

“Our number one priority remains focused on accessing the container, and the rescue teams cannot be praised enough for their unrelenting efforts to clear the huge rock fall under very difficult and dangerous underground conditions,” he said.

The Minister of Mineral Resources, Mr Mosebenzi Zwane, visited the disaster scene on Friday evening, together with other senior government officials and union leadership who remain on the scene. All operations at Lily Mine – which employs more than 650 people – have been suspended in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Ends

Further updates to follow as and when new information becomes available.