

**WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT JOHANNESBURG,  
26 AUGUST – 4 SEPTEMBER 2002**

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*Speech by Mr B P Gilbertson to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development / International Institute for Economic Development, Mining, Minerals & Sustainable Development meeting Friday, 30th August 2002*

So much has been said in recent weeks about this great Summit, so many divergent views drawn as “lines in the sand”, that I despair at finding a new perspective. What might we say from this place, this fringe-theatre which is the Global Mining Initiative (“GMI”) and the Mining, Minerals Sustainable Development (“MMSD”) project, to contribute to the weighty deliberations of the full World Summit?

I thought that if I borrowed a few soaring lines from three orators of our century, then my comments this morning might be lifted above the pedestrian, perhaps even to reach the ears of that wider audience.

What better speaker with whom to start than with Africa’s most revered statesman. Here is Mr Nelson Mandela, facing the death penalty in the Palace of Justice in Pretoria, which is only a 20 minute drive north of here. It is the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1964, and just before sentence is passed, he addresses the Court :

*“Our fight is against real, not imaginary hardships. We fight against two features which are the hallmarks of African life. These features are poverty and lack of human dignity. The whites enjoy what may well be the highest standard of living in the world, whilst Africans live in poverty and misery”.*

Nearly 4 decades have passed since Mr Mandela spoke those words. Much has changed here. The political injustice was swept away in 1994, but that chasm between the rich and the poor remains, though the stark black-white divide of yore has blurred. Yet, only this week, the Governor of the South African Reserve Bank reminded us that 30 per cent of the economically active population of this country is out of work. South Africa’s problem — abject poverty in a world of plenty — is

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repeated endlessly, as if reflected in 2 facing mirrors, all across our planet, where more than a billion people live on less than \$1 per day.

Mankind cannot accept this condition as permanent. No man, no country should sleep soundly while his neighbour is in misery. The Herculean burden of finding a remedy is far beyond the abilities of our small mining industry : It rests rather on the shoulders of the Governments of the world, perhaps mainly with the wealthy nations. But from this place, from this fringe-theatre, the GMI can say :

*We are ready to play our part, small though it may be, in taking up that global challenge of poverty.*

\* \* \* \* \*

My second choice of orator is soon-to-be President John F Kennedy. Speaking on 15 July 1960, he offers a message of hope to millions of Americans :

*“The American people expect more from us than cries of indignation and attack. The times are too grave, the challenge too urgent, and the stakes too high — to permit the customary passions of political debate. We are not here to curse the darkness, but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future ---. Today our concern must be with that future. For the world is changing. The old era is ending. The old ways will not do.”*

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And to those stirring words I add two lines from his inaugural address, given some six months later :

*“The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty”.*

Were ever words more fitted to the mood, the hopes, of this World Summit ? Again, the burden of bringing major progress must rest upon broader shoulders : But from this place, from this fringe-theatre, the GMI can say :  
*We are ready to play our part, small though it may be.*

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Perhaps I have not given full weight to the contribution that the mining and minerals industry might make in bringing about that fairer future. I therefore borrow from my third orator, and paraphrase just a little out of context. The speaker is Robert Kennedy, brother of the by-now assassinated President. He is standing at the foot of Africa, addressing students at the University of Cape Town on 7 June 1966 :

*“Each time a man acts to improve the lot of others, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls”.*

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Our Mozal project was such a ripple.

Mozal is a primary aluminium smelter about 15 kilometres from Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. Its capacity will soon reach half-a-million tons per annum and it is the industry benchmark, technically and economically the most efficient in the world.

When we committed to the project back in 1998, Mozambique was still emerging from a bitter civil war, which had ravaged its infrastructure, its institutions. The population was impoverished, the economy dormant.

The Mozal investment, which will ultimately exceed US\$2 billion, has been pivotal in the country's economic recovery, contributing 30% of the national growth rate in 2001. It has brought training, skills and jobs, and net export earnings that will ultimately exceed half a billion US dollars per annum. Indeed it marked the country as *"attractive to international capital"*. Perhaps happiest of all, our community health initiatives have reduced the prevalence of malaria in the southern part of Mozambique by more than 40%, greatly improving the lives of a myriad people.

And so it is that, through projects like Mozal, our mining industry can say :  
*We ARE able to play our part.*

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I know of course, as do you all, that not every resource project is as successful in meeting Sustainable Development criteria as Mozal. The real challenges of Sustainable Development arise when a major project goes awry, when one stares

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into an environmental abyss. For BHP Billiton, that abyss was Ok Tedi. Those of you familiar with the history will know of the complex trade-offs that had to be made. The final result has not, I think, fully satisfied everybody, but most will concede that it represents the best trade-off that could be made in very complex circumstances, by parties acting in good faith, and with the best of intentions.

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Perhaps everything I have said so far can be captured by a single line from President Kennedy's inaugural address, the one where he says :

*"The torch has been passed to a new generation".*

The founding of the GMI nearly three years ago, by nine of the world's largest mining companies, constituted the passing of the torch. It marked the renewal of our industry's commitment to the pillars of Sustainable Development. The first product of that commitment, the first flickerings of illumination from our torch, was the completion of the MMSD project. It has brought much self-examination throughout the industry, and from that flows change for the good.

And so the final message from this place, from this fringe-theatre, is yet again :  
*Our industry is ready to play its part.*

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