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BOTSWANA MINING REVIEW

Leveraging Legacy Data with AI ignites Africa's Subsurface Exploration Paradigm

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Ulla Setswalo (Editor)

This edition is anchored by a defining theme, the transformation of mining from a resource-driven industry into a data-driven, intelligence-led ecosystem. Our cover feature captures this shift with precision and authority. Through the insights of Botswana Minerals PLC Managing Director James A.H. Campbell, the industry's constraint is no longer access to data but the ability to interpret it. As artificial intelligence reshapes exploration workflows, compressing years of geological analysis into weeks, a new exploration paradigm is emerging across Botswana, Southern Africa and the wider continent, one defined by precision, speed and capital discipline.

This transformation is not happening in isolation. Across the region, mining activity is intensifying in both scope and sophistication. Botswana continues to assert its position as a stable and data-forward jurisdiction, leveraging institutional strengths such as the Botswana Geoscience Institute to enhance exploration attractiveness. At the same time, neighbouring markets, including Namibia and South Africa, are gaining momentum, supported by renewed exploration investment and evolving commodity demand linked to the global energy transition.

Technology, as highlighted through Seequent's expanding role, is becoming the central enabler of this shift. The integration of geological, geophysical and geochemical datasets into decision-ready models is redefining how companies assess risk, allocate capital and pursue discovery. It is also elevating the strategic importance of data accessibility and regulatory responsiveness, two factors increasingly shaping investment flows into African mining jurisdictions.

Yet, while innovation is accelerating opportunity, our coverage also reflects the structural realities facing the sector. In South Africa, the escalation of illegal mining and associated criminal networks is forcing a fundamental rethink of security architecture, reinforcing the need for intelligence-led, coordinated responses across industry and government. These developments underscore a broader truth: operational resilience is now as critical as geological prospectivity.

Beyond Southern Africa, the continental narrative continues to evolve. Nigeria's renewed focus on leveraging its substantial mineral wealth signals a shift toward mining-led industrialisation in West Africa, while East African markets are increasingly prioritising localisation, value addition and supply chain development within their mining ecosystems. Collectively, these movements point to a continent that is not only resource-rich but increasingly strategic in how those resources are developed and monetised.

Globally, mining is being reshaped by the convergence of energy transition pressures, technological disruption and capital selectivity. Demand for critical minerals continues to rise, but so too does the expectation for efficiency, transparency and sustainability. In this context, Africa's competitive advantage will not be defined solely by its geology but by its ability to align policy, technology, investment and human capital.

What emerges from this edition is a cohesive narrative of momentum. From AI-enabled subsurface intelligence in Botswana, to infrastructure-linked investment platforms in Southern Africa, to industrial policy shifts across the continent, mining is entering a new phase, one where data, discipline and decision-making converge. The subsurface may remain constant but the tools, thinking and expectations surrounding it have fundamentally changed.

Zambia Sees Renewed Investor Appetite as Post-Default Recovery Gains Momentum

Zambia is witnessing a marked return of investor interest across its mining, energy and agriculture sectors as fiscal reforms and debt restructuring efforts begin to restore macroeconomic stability following the country's sovereign default.

Speaking to Reuters, Citi's Zambia Chief Executive and banking head, Lowani Chibesakunda, said investor sentiment has strengthened in line with visible progress in stabilising the economy and improving policy credibility.

"We have noted increased interest, especially when we have seen significant strides being made in terms of bringing stability to the Zambian economy," Chibesakunda said. "We have noted key interests in mining, in energy, as well as in agriculture."

Zambia's renewed appeal is anchored by its vast copper reserves, which continue to position the country as a strategic supplier of a metal central to the global energy transition. Rising demand from electric vehicles, renewable energy systems and AI-driven data infrastructure is further reinforcing the sector's long-term outlook.

"You cannot talk about the Zambian story without emphasising the importance of mining and seeing how copper prices have remained bullish," she said. "The focus that is there now on copper-related products, be it your electric vehicles, et cetera, is really driving a lot of growth in that sector."

The improved sentiment follows Zambia's progress in debt restructuring, including a 97.85% participation rate in a $1.365 billion cash tender offer launched on May 29. The Ministry of Finance has described the transaction as part of broader efforts to enhance debt sustainability and reduce long-term fiscal pressure. Citi acted as the sole mandated bank in structuring and executing the deal.

Analysts say the combination of macroeconomic stabilisation, ongoing reforms and strong commodity fundamentals is repositioning Zambia as an increasingly attractive destination for long-term capital, particularly in critical minerals and energy-linked industries.

First Mining Secures Federal Approval for $957m Springpole Gold Project

Marking a major milestone in advancing one of Canada's largest undeveloped gold resources toward construction, First Mining Gold Corporation has received federal environmental approval for its flagship Springpole gold project in Ontario.

The decision follows a comprehensive environmental assessment process that has been underway since 2018, incorporating input from Indigenous communities, government agencies and the public. Key federal departments involved in the review included Environment and Climate Change Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Transport Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

First Mining has received approval to advance to the next phase of project development. The focus will now be on optimising engineering and preparing for construction of a proposed openpit gold and silver mine, which will include an on-site processing mill. This nearly $1 billion project is expected to yield strong production results, with a target of an average annual payable gold output of 330,000 ounces during its first five years. Over an estimated mine life of 9.4 years, production is projected to average 281,000 ounces per year.

The Chief Executive Officer, Dan Wilton shared the project's broader economic impact, noting that surrounding communities and municipalities stand to benefit from job creation, procurement opportunities and long-term regional investment. "Local communities and municipalities are poised to benefit economically and socially from Springpole's development," said Wilton. He highlighted the project's potential to generate billions in government revenue while supporting regional and Indigenous businesses. Canada's Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Julie Dabrusin, underscored the balance between development and environmental stewardship. "The Springpole project demonstrates how major projects can move forward in a responsible way, grounded in science, indigenous knowledge and meaningful consultation. With strong, legally binding conditions in place to protect the environment and Indigenous rights, this project can contribute to good jobs, economic growth and sustainable development for Canadians," said Dabrusin.

Canada's Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Julie Dabrusin, emphasised the importance of balancing development with environmental stewardship. She stated, "The Springpole project shows that significant projects can proceed responsibly, rooted in scientific knowledge, Indigenous insights and meaningful consultation. With strict, legally binding conditions in place to protect both the environment and Indigenous rights, this project has the potential to create good jobs, drive economic growth and promote sustainable development for Canadians."

Tower Resources Secures Final Approval for Namibia Offshore Farm-Out

London-listed Tower Resources has received final regulatory approval from Namibia's Ministry of Industries, Mines and Energy to complete the farm-out of its PEL96 offshore licence to Prime Global Energies, clearing the last hurdle for the transaction.

The approval satisfies the final condition precedent under the agreement announced in January 2025, enabling Tower to move toward formal completion. The company will now issue a notice of completion to Prime and circulate the required assignment and amendment documentation to the ministry and joint venture partners, with closure expected shortly. PEL96 spans blocks 1910A, 1911 and 1912B, covering approximately 23,297 km² in the northern Walvis Basin and Dolphin Graben offshore Namibia. The licence sits within one of the country's increasingly active exploration corridors, where 2D seismic data has identified multiple prospects across stacked reservoir targets.

Tower Resources Chair and CEO Jeremy Asher said the company views Prime Global Energies as a strategically aligned partner capable of advancing the asset. "We would like to welcome Prime, who we view as a highly favourable partner for PEL96, with substantial technical and financial resources and a track record of operational success. We look forward to working alongside them and our other stakeholders to progress with the work programme offshore Namibia," he said.

The farm-out strengthens Tower's capacity to progress exploration activity in Namibia, a jurisdiction that continues to attract growing international interest following a series of offshore discoveries and heightened exploration momentum. Separately, Tower is still awaiting approval for its subsidiary's proposed acquisition of an additional 5% participating interest in PEL96 from local partner ZM Fourteen Investment. While regulatory delays mean the original completion timeline has lapsed, discussions between the parties remain ongoing.

Tower Resources, listed on London's AIM market, maintains a diversified African portfolio, with production interests in Cameroon and exploration assets in Namibia and South Africa. The Namibia farm-out signals a continued focus on de-risking exploration through strategic partnerships while positioning for potential upside in one of Africa's most closely watched offshore basins.

$750bn Nigerian Mineral Wealth to Anchor Africa's Mining Transformation

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development in Nigeria, Dele Alake, has announced that the country's estimated $750 billion mineral potential will play a central role in driving Africa's next phase of mining-led industrialisation and economic transformation.

Alake made the remarks following a high-level meeting in Abuja with the leadership of Energy Capital and Power, organisers of African Mining Week 2026, where he confirmed Nigeria's participation in the upcoming summit in South Africa, positioning the country at the forefront of continental mining dialogue and investment mobilisation.

He said Nigeria's engagement comes at a pivotal moment for the continent, following the ratification of the Africa Minerals Strategy Group (AMSG) Charter and the appointment of President Bola Tinubu as the inaugural Chairperson of the AMSG Ministerial Steering Committee. "Nigeria is committed to leading a new era of African mining built on regional cooperation, responsible resource governance, value addition and increased African participation across strategic mineral value chains," said Alake.

He added that platforms such as African Mining Week are critical for turning continental policy ambitions into practical investment partnerships and coordinated industrial outcomes. Alake noted that Nigeria is positioning itself as a key driver of Africa's mining policy direction, with reforms aimed at unlocking its vast untapped mineral base and strengthening its role in global supply chains.

The government is targeting a stronger contribution from mining to national GDP, alongside expanded exploration activity, improved geological data systems and increased local beneficiation capacity. He said the long-term objective is to shift Nigeria from raw extraction to value addition and industrial production within Africa.

Beyond national reforms, Nigeria is also pushing deeper cooperation with African partners, including South Africa and South Sudan, as part of a broader strategy to build integrated mineral markets and shared infrastructure. According to Alake, Africa's competitiveness in critical minerals will depend on cross-border coordination, joint investment frameworks and stronger public-private partnerships.

A key focus of the upcoming African Mining Week will be the AMSG Ministerial and CEO Roundtable. This event will gather policymakers, investors and industry leaders to discuss regional policy alignment, strategic financing and value chain development. The session is expected to highlight emerging continental initiatives, including the proposed Africa Minerals and Metals Exchange, frameworks for mineral tokenisation, and large-scale geological mapping programmes aimed at improving investment readiness across African mining jurisdictions.

With Nigeria positioning its strategy around large-scale mineral wealth and regional leadership, the broader continental narrative increasingly centres on one objective: transforming Africa from a raw commodity supplier into a globally competitive, value-added mining powerhouse.

Buzwagi SEZ Positioned as Mining Industrial Anchor in Tanzania

Tanzania's Minister for Minerals, Anthony Mavunde has proposed the Buzwagi Special Economic Zone in Kahama District as the preferred site for the investment, positioning it as a dedicated industrial hub for mining supply manufacturing, mineral processing and value addition.

He said the initiative aligns with government efforts to build a more integrated mining ecosystem that links extraction with local manufacturing and industrial development. Tanzania's strategy is increasingly focused on shifting parts of the mining value chain onshore, particularly in areas where consistent demand already exists.

"The government's objective is to create a favourable investment environment that encourages local production of mining inputs and strengthens linkages between mining and manufacturing," said Mavunde. He concluded that local production of grinding balls would reduce import dependency, improve supply chain resilience and lower operational costs for mining companies operating in the country.

Leveraging Legacy Data with AI ignites Africa's Subsurface Exploration Paradigm

In a year marked by rapid technological disruption and a growing global demand for critical minerals, Seequent Day in Johannesburg on June 25, 2026, made it clear that Africa's mineral future will be shaped as much by algorithms as by traditional drilling methods. The focal point of this event was James A.H. Campbell, Managing Director of Botswana Minerals PLC. His keynote address and contributions to the panel cut through the noise with a clear and urgent message: the mining industry does not lack data; it lacks an integrated understanding of that data.

His thesis was uncompromising, noting that Artificial intelligence (AI) is not here to replace geologists but to make them better. "AI is not a magic wand. It is a risk-reduction instrument for better geological decisions," said Campbell. The significance of this message extends far beyond a single conference. Across Botswana, Southern Africa and the wider continent, exploration is entering a new phase, one defined by complexity, competition and capital discipline. The easy discoveries have largely been made. What remains lies deeper, under cover or hidden within subtle geological systems that require more than traditional methods to uncover. At the same time, global demand for copper, lithium, cobalt and rare earth elements continues to surge, driven by electrification, energy transition and digital infrastructure. This is where Seequent's role becomes critical.

As a global leader in subsurface software and geoscience solutions, Seequent is increasingly positioning itself not just as a technology provider but as an enabler of smarter, faster and more defensible exploration decisions. Its growing footprint across Africa reflects a broader shift; the continent is no longer just a destination for extraction but is becoming a proving ground for innovation in exploration. For Botswana Minerals, the opportunity lies in what many once overlooked. With a data footprint spanning approximately 95,000 square kilometres, including 375,000 line-kilometres of airborne geophysics and over 358,000 soil samples, the company holds one of the most extensive legacy datasets in the region. But as Campbell emphasised, the value is not in the volume; it is in the reinterpretation. He added, "Legacy data is not historical debris. Properly structured, it can become a strategic asset."

Through AI-assisted analysis, Botswana Minerals has been able to compress years of exploration work into months, sometimes even weeks, unlocking new prospectivity insights while validating known mineral systems. The result is not just more targets but better targets, ranked, refined and ready for field validation. This shift from data accumulation to data exploitation is redefining the economics of exploration. Yet, even as technology accelerates discovery, a critical constraint remains of regulation. Campbell highlighted a growing disconnect between the speed of AI-driven exploration and the pace of licensing and regulatory processes. "AI has certainly compressed years of work into months, but the disconnect sits in the regulatory process, which still moves at the speed of government bureaucracy," noted Campbell.

Botswana, long regarded as one of Africa's most stable and efficient mining jurisdictions, still performs better than many global counterparts. However, for companies operating across multiple commodities and licences, flexibility remains a challenge. Botswana Minerals, for instance, is balancing its strategic focus on copper, particularly within the Damara Belt, with the retention of diamond licences for future optionality. The ability to allocate capital dynamically across these assets, while maintaining regulatory compliance, is becoming increasingly important in an AI-driven environment. One area where Botswana continues to lead is in geological data accessibility. The Botswana Geoscience Institute (BGI) has already established a robust national data platform, providing access to decades of geophysical, geochemical and reporting data. For Campbell, this represents a competitive advantage not just for companies but for the country itself. The implication is profound: in the modern mining economy, data quality and accessibility are no longer technical considerations; they are strategic assets. Countries that invest in digitisation, standardisation and intelligent data exposure will attract higher-quality exploration capital. Those that do not risk being left behind.


James A.H Campbell

The question on many minds at Seequent Day was whether Southern Africa is entering a new exploration supercycle. The answer, according to Campbell, is cautiously optimistic. Namibia has already surged ahead in exploration expenditure, particularly in copper, while activity in South Africa's Northern Cape is gaining momentum. Botswana, too, is showing signs of resurgence. However, according to Campbell, the trajectory will depend on three critical factors: funding, political risk and regulatory efficiency. He said, "Yes, we could well be having a potential supercycle, but it all comes down to capital, policy and the ability to move licences quickly and efficiently." Despite the growing influence of AI, one message resonated above all others: geology still matters. This is the human edge in a machine case. AI can identify patterns, rank targets and accelerate workflows, but it cannot replace human judgement. It cannot interpret context, challenge assumptions or make accountable decisions. "AI can suggest where to look. It cannot tell us what the rocks mean unless geologists ask the right questions This "glass box" approach, where models are transparent, explainable and defensible, is becoming essential, particularly for listed companies operating under investor scrutiny," explained Campbell.

Perhaps the most forward-looking insight from Seequent Day was not technological but human. Africa's geological endowment is undisputed. What remains uncertain is whether the continent can cultivate the next generation of explorers capable of unlocking it. “We need to grow the next generation of African junior mining entrepreneurs. Those are the people who will discover the mines of the future,” urged Campbell. This call to action extends to governments, investors and industry leaders alike. Creating an enabling environment, one that supports innovation, reduces barriers and rewards disciplined exploration, will be key to sustaining long-term growth. In this evolving landscape, Seequent’s value proposition is becoming increasingly clear. By enabling the integration of geological, geophysical and geochemical data into cohesive, decision-ready models, the company is helping bridge the gap between raw information and actionable insight.

From Botswana to Namibia and across the broader African continent, Seequent’s technologies are supporting a new generation of exploration strategies, ones that are faster, smarter and more capital-efficient. Globally, this positions Seequent at the forefront of a structural shift in mining: the transition from analogue exploration to digital, data-driven discovery.

Seequent Day Johannesburg was a reflection of an industry in transition and a continent on the cusp of transformation.

The subsurface has not changed, but the ability to understand it has. As AI continues to reshape exploration, the winners will not be those with the most data or even the most advanced algorithms. They will be those who combine geological discipline, technological capability and strategic clarity. In the words of James Campbell, “The future belongs to explorers who can turn data into decisions and decisions into discovery.”

Financing the Future - Standard Bank's Strategic Lens on the DRC Mining Economy

As the global economy recalibrates around energy transition imperatives, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has emerged as one of the world's most strategically significant mining jurisdictions. For Standard Bank, this represents not merely an opportunity but a long-term commitment underpinned by deep sector expertise, disciplined risk management and a firm conviction in Africa's industrial future.

Standard Bank DRC's Chief Executive and Head of Corporate and Investment Banking, Marie-Gabrielle Opese, offers a clear-eyed view of a market defined by extraordinary resource wealth, evolving geopolitical interest and persistent structural challenges. "The DRC is number one globally in cobalt production and number two in copper, with around 70% of the world's cobalt coming from the country.

These are critical minerals for the global energy transition," noted Opese. This resource dominance is now attracting intensified geopolitical interest. While DRC has long established partners in the sector, increasing engagement from other international stakeholders is contributing to a more diverse and dynamic investment landscape. As Opese explained, "We are seeing broader interest from other partners as they seek to secure access to critical minerals and strengthen supply chain resilience. For the DRC, this presents an important opportunity to accelerate industrialisation and advance local beneficiation of its mineral resources."

Despite strong fundamentals, capital allocation across the mining value chain is being reshaped by two structural constraints, energy and infrastructure. "Energy shortages and logistics challenges are the primary factors influencing investment decisions. Mining companies are increasingly allocating capital towards power generation and infrastructure, integrating these into their operating models," said Opese. This has accelerated the development of more diversified energy financing structures, including public-private partnerships with SNEL, independent power producers deploying renewable solutions such as solar and blended finance models supported by development finance institutions. Hybrid energy systems are also gaining traction, combining hydropower from the Congo River with solar and battery storage technologies to enhance reliability and support decarbonisation objectives. In parallel, cross-border electricity imports from countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe are contributing to supply diversification through multi-party arrangements involving mining operators, foreign suppliers and SNEL.

For financial institutions, the DRC represents both significant opportunity and heightened complexity. Standard Bank's approach is anchored in rigorous due diligence, close client engagement and strict adherence to evolving ESG and regulatory standards. "We ensure that ESG is not just a compliance exercise but a core driver of long-term project viability. Every financing decision includes a comprehensive ESG risk assessment, and we work closely with clients to align with both local regulations and international standards," added Opese. The bank also plays a critical advisory role, particularly for international investors navigating the DRC's regulatory environment. Opese noted, "We support our clients throughout the journey by ensuring they understand foreign exchange controls, compliance requirements and the broader operating context."

Standard Bank's differentiation lies in its ability to support mining clients across the entire value chain from early-stage exploration through to production, expansion and export logistics. "With our African footprint, sector expertise, and strong balance sheet, we are able to provide integrated solutions, including project finance, working capital, foreign exchange services and access to international capital markets," explained Opese.This long-term partnership approach has seen the bank support projects from greenfield development to becoming some of the DRC's leading producers.

Beyond project-level financing, the DRC's geographic position presents a strategic advantage in shaping regional trade and integration. "With nine neighbouring countries and access to both western and eastern trade routes, the DRC is naturally positioned as a regional hub," said Opese. Infrastructure initiatives such as the Lobito Corridor are central to this vision, offering the potential to reduce transport costs, improve export efficiency and strengthen regional value chains. Opese added, "If we improve evacuation corridors and logistics, we can significantly reduce production costs and enhance competitiveness. This is key not only for the DRC but also for the broader region's industrialisation."

In an increasingly scrutinised global mining environment, responsible finance is foundational. "For us, responsible mining finance means supporting projects that deliver economic value while ensuring positive environmental and social outcomes. Transparency, compliance and measurable ESG performance are non-negotiable," emphasised Opese. Standard Bank's sustained presence at DRC Mining Week, spanning over two decades, reflects its enduring commitment to the sector. "DRC Mining Week is a vital platform for dialogue between industry, investors and policymakers. Our message remains clear: despite its challenges, the DRC is one of the most attractive mining investment destinations globally, with some of the lowest production costs," concluded Opese.

As global demand for critical minerals accelerates, Standard Bank's role is increasingly defined by its ability to connect capital, unlock scalable sustainable solutions and support the structural transformation of one of Africa's most resource-endowed economies. In doing so, the bank moves beyond transactional financing, positioning itself as a catalyst for industrial depth, regional integration and long-term value creation. The bank is helping to redefine how Africa's mineral wealth is financed, developed and translated into enduring economic power.

Seequent Day Marks Mining's Digital Turning Point as AI-Powered Geoscience Rises

Johannesburg recently hosted a pivotal gathering of geoscience leaders, industry executives and technology specialists at Seequent Day on June 25, 2026, an event that crystallised a fundamental shift in how the mining and exploration sector approaches discovery risk, subsurface intelligence and digital transformation. At the centre of discussions was a unifying thesis: that the convergence of artificial intelligence, structured data, and geological expertise is redefining exploration from a high-risk, capital-intensive endeavour into a more informed, decision-driven discipline.The tone across keynote addresses, technical presentations and panel discussions was consistent. As one speaker put it, integrated intelligence, not isolated tools, will define competitive advantage in the years ahead.

A central highlight of the event was the introduction of Seequent Evo, the company's cloud-based platform built to connect geoscience workflows, data environments and decision-making processes. Seequent Evo signals a strategic shift toward integrated subsurface collaboration, allowing teams to work across datasets, disciplines and geographies in real time. Rather than functioning as a standalone tool, it is conceived as a digital ecosystem bringing together geological modelling, geophysical data, geotechnical inputs and AI-assisted interpretation in a single environment. Seequent's Head of Customer Solutions, Marc Delport, framed the shift plainly in his presentation, "Seequent – Understand the Underground": the future of exploration will be defined not by isolated software capabilities but by connected platforms enabling faster, more transparent and more defensible decisions. Integration and interpretability, he argued, are becoming as important as modelling capability itself.

A pragmatic view of artificial intelligence underscored the discussions of the day, emphasizing that AI should be seen not as a substitute for geological expertise but as an enhancement of it. James Campbell, Managing Director of Botswana Minerals PLC, delivered a keynote titled "Re-Examining the Subsurface – AI, Legacy Data and the Future of Mineral Discovery." He argued that AI's greatest value lies in its ability to analyse complex datasets, reveal patterns and minimize what he referred to as the avoidable risks associated with exploration. While Campbell acknowledged that uncertainty can never be entirely eliminated from exploration, he suggested that it can be better managed through improved data integration and interpretation. One of the day's most thought-provoking reframings challenged a long-standing industry assumption: the new frontier in exploration is not about deeper drilling but rather about better integration before drilling occurs. This shift in perspective has structural implications, as capital is increasingly directed toward enhancing intelligence in the exploration cycle to improve targeting accuracy and reduce drilling inefficiencies.

The South African perspective was highlighted by Mosa Mabuza, the Chief Executive Officer of South Africa's Council for Geoscience, who participated in the VIP panel discussion. He discussed how government policy is starting to turn the country's geological resources into viable investment opportunities. Mabuza emphasized South Africa's vast and largely underexplored geological potential, noting that the government has consistently increased its investment in geoscience as a national strategic asset. Currently, onshore exploration permits are granted for only about 20 percent of the available land, which he presented as evidence of significant untapped opportunities for explorers willing to navigate the country's data and regulatory framework.

For Mabuza, the central challenge is translating subsurface data into a language investors can act on. To that end, he highlighted the government's establishment of a dedicated Junior Exploration Fund, designed to lower the barrier to entry for smaller, higher-risk exploration players who have historically struggled to access capital. He revealed that the President had allocated R200 million to the Council for Geoscience to demonstrate the country's exploration capability, a mandate Mabuza described as both an opportunity and a proof point for what coordinated, data-led exploration can achieve at a national scale.

Mabuza also disclosed that the Council is in active communication with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange to explore what incentives might be offered to attract junior and exploration-stage companies to list and raise capital domestically, reinforcing the broader industry view, echoed throughout the day, that capital flows follow clarity. Central to this effort is a national geoscience data portal, through which the Council is tracking uptake and engagement, with Mabuza citing that roughly 200,000 ordinary South Africans have already shown interest in the country's geological potential through the platform, a statistic he offered as evidence that public appetite for geoscience and exploration extends well beyond the traditional investor base.

This theme found further concrete expression in technical contributions from academia and industry alike. The University of the Witwatersrand's Musa Buthelezi presented research on unsupervised anomaly detection in regional stream sediment datasets from the Okiep Copper District, illustrating how machine learning can sharpen geochemical interpretation. Anton Geldenhuys of African Rainbow Minerals offered insights into Merensky grade control at Two Rivers Platinum Mine, while contributions from Valterra Platinum and others underscored a growing reliance on integrated structural and geotechnical modelling to improve decision accuracy. A recurring thread throughout the event was the re-evaluation of legacy geological datasets. Through structured workflows and AI-assisted interpretation, historical exploration data is increasingly being converted into ranked exploration targets with measurable commercial relevance. As one speaker observed, vast volumes of geological information already exist, so the competitive advantage now lies in converting that information into actionable intelligence.

Beyond the technology narrative, Seequent used the platform to reinforce its expanding footprint across the continent. Seequent's Business Development Manager – Insights and Strategy EMEA, Andrew Quixley, noted that the company now supports customers in 39 African countries, including Madagascar, with regional teams in South Africa, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Dubai serving sub-Saharan and North Africa, respectively. Seequent's customer base, he said, spans major, mid-tier and junior mining companies, geoscience consultancies and government geological surveys. Quixley pointed to Morocco's Managem Group as a case study in digital transformation, where Seequent solutions supported the digitisation of extensive historical datasets, turning fragmented archives into structured, AI-ready exploration assets.

He also highlighted work with South Africa's Council for Geoscience, where consolidating diverse datasets has improved access to subsurface intelligence and reduced exploration risk, and the CGS National Digital Core Library was cited as a benchmark for national-scale geoscience digitisation, a point that resonated directly with Mabuza's own remarks on the Council's data ambitions. In Ghana, Seequent, through Bentley Systems, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ghana Geological Survey Authority to strengthen geoscience capacity through access to modelling software and specialist training, complementing its participation in PanAfGeo+, a long-running collaboration between African and European geological surveys aimed at building continental geoscience capability.

A further theme cutting across sessions was the distinction between accumulating data and making it usable. While exploration datasets are expanding rapidly, speakers stressed that value is only realised when data is accessible, interoperable and aligned with decision-making frameworks. Case studies from ERM, Anglo American, Knight Piésold and Minrom Consulting illustrated how integrated modelling workflows are increasingly bridging geological interpretation and engineering decision-making, reducing uncertainty across mine development and operations. The financial stakes of this shift were also addressed directly. Panellists agreed that improved transparency, structured reporting and coherent geological narratives are essential to attracting capital into early-stage exploration, pointing to Botswana's mandatory geological reporting framework as an example of how regulatory clarity can bolster investor confidence. The point was distilled in one memorable line: that capital flows follow clarity, and clarity depends on data integrity and interpretation quality.

Although there is a strong focus on technology, human capital remains a central topic of discussion. Industry leaders emphasised that the next generation of geoscientists must be proficient in geological, digital and commercial domains. The Global Academic Programme by Seequent was highlighted as a crucial facilitator of this transition. This program supports universities in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia by providing access to Visible Geology, a cloud-based educational platform designed to enhance foundational geoscience training. This initiative is further supported by the Ghana MOU and other workforce development initiatives throughout the continent.

Quixley outlined several structural trends shaping Seequent's African strategy. Rising global demand for critical minerals, driven by the energy transition and industrial growth, is expected to accelerate exploration activity across the continent. At the same time, growing emphasis on geothermal energy, particularly in East Africa, and on groundwater modelling reflects Africa's expanding need for sustainable energy and water resource management. The Kenya Nationwide Airborne Geophysical Survey, which integrated magnetic, radiometric and high-density GPS data, was cited as a leading example of how advanced geoscience workflows can simultaneously unlock mineral, geothermal and aquifer potential. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations are also becoming increasingly embedded in modelling and decision systems, particularly around tailings management and contamination risk, reflecting a broader shift toward responsible resource development.

Seequent Day ultimately reinforced a broader industry transition, that exploration is evolving from a discipline defined by uncertainty toward one guided by integrated intelligence. The subsurface itself has not changed, but the tools used to understand it have advanced significantly. Platforms such as Seequent Evo, combined with AI-enabled workflows, national-scale datasets and improved data governance, are enabling a more disciplined and transparent approach to discovery. For Africa, the implications are significant; with vast geological potential, accelerating digitisation and expanding institutional capability, the continent is well positioned to benefit from this transformation, provided technology, policy, investment and human capability are aligned into a coherent system of progress.

The message from Seequent Day was crystal clear and consequential: the future of exploration will be shaped not only by what lies beneath the ground but also by how effectively the industry integrates, interprets and acts on the data that reveals it.Competitive advantage will belong to those who can fuse geological discipline, data intelligence and commercial judgement into a unified strategy. The evolution is already underway, so the only question now is how quickly the industry can adapt to realise its full potential.


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Vice President Signals New Economic Era at Mining Summit

The Future of Mining Summit 2026, held from 29–30 June in Gaborone, opened with a clear and forceful national message: Botswana's mining sector must evolve from a foundation of extraction into a catalyst for industrialisation, diversification and shared prosperity. Held under the theme 'Mining for Transformation: Economic Diversification and Shared Prosperity', the summit cemented its position as Botswana's largest privately organised mining conference, attracting more than 1,500 delegates, over 100 exhibitors and high-level representation from government, industry, finance and development partners.

The opening day is marked by a defining address from Vice President and Minister of Finance Ndaba Nkosinathi Gaolathe, who situates Botswana's current economic moment within a broader historical and philosophical arc of nation-building. In a wide-ranging keynote, Gaolathe reflects on Botswana's founding development philosophy, crediting early leaders for transforming mineral wealth into public goods, institutions and long-term stability.

"Diamonds became classrooms instead of conflict, hospitals instead of hardship, roads instead of ruin and institutions instead of instability," noted Gaolathe. He described Botswana's early success as proof that natural resources, when governed with discipline and integrity, can become a national blessing rather than a curse. Yet his message quickly turns forward-looking and more urgent. While acknowledging Botswana's rise to upper-middle-income status, he cautioned that the country now stands at a new crossroads defined not by discovery, but by reinvention. "No nation can live indefinitely on the wisdom of its founders," stated Gaolathe, warning that institutional fatigue, execution gaps and slowing transformation momentum risk undermining past gains. The Vice President frames the central national question as no longer about extraction but about legacy. He asked, "What will Botswana build before the shafts fall silent?"

A central theme of the address is a decisive shift in how mining value is defined. Gaolathe argued that the true measure of the sector is no longer export volumes but the ecosystems created around extraction. "Every mine should become the nucleus of a wider industrial ecosystem. Mining operations should drive manufacturing, logistics, engineering, financial services, digital innovation and citizen enterprise development," said Gaolathe.

He further positioned beneficiation as a strategic necessity rather than an aspiration, while acknowledging the structural realities that often undermine industrial ambitions across resource-rich economies.According to Gaolathe, industrialisation is not a single project but an ecosystem requiring energy security, logistics efficiency, skills development and access to finance.

A major pillar of the Vice President's speech is the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP), described as the country's "national operating system for economic transformation." The programme consolidates nearly 7,000 proposals into 186 priority projects spanning mining, energy, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, infrastructure, financial services and digitalisation. Collectively, these initiatives are expected to mobilise over P500 billion in investment and create more than 500,000 jobs by 2036. Gaolathe emphasises that transformation will not be driven by policy alone but by coordinated execution across sectors. "Modern economies succeed not because sectors perform in isolation, but because the system functions as one," added Gaolathe.

Reinforcing the government's policy direction, Minister of Minerals and Energy Bogolo Joy Kenewendo outlines forthcoming Mines and Minerals Regulations that will reshape licensing, beneficiation, and citizen participation frameworks. The reforms introduce minimum beneficiation requirements across mineral categories, tighter licence renewal conditions and stronger local content obligations. Kenewendo states that citizen participation will no longer be optional. Instead, it will become a structural requirement of mining participation in Botswana's economy. The objective, she explains, is to attract "genuine investment that produces jobs, builds industries and advances economic diversification," while eliminating speculative licence holding.

The summit opened with remarks from Edwin Elias, the Chief Executive Officer of Morupule Coal Mine, who provided a strong industry perspective aligned with the national policy direction. Elias emphasised the need for a deliberate shift from extraction-focused strategies to those that prioritize value creation and industrial development. "Mining, when approached with purpose and accountability, is one of the most powerful tools for a nation's development," he stated. He also highlighted Morupule Coal Mine's Citizen Economic Empowerment Programme, which has achieved a cumulative expenditure of over P1 billion and engaged more than 1,500 citizen-owned enterprises. Additionally, Elias referenced the company's #1-3-27 corporate strategy, describing it as a disciplined framework that guides diversification beyond coal and strengthens Botswana's long-term energy security.

However, he warns that isolated corporate efforts are insufficient without alignment between policy, industry and community development. "That alignment is precisely what platforms such as this summit exist to achieve," he noted, underscoring the summit's role as a national coordination space. Now in its third edition, the Future of Mining Summit has grown rapidly since its inception. From 470 delegates in 2024 to over 1,500 in 2026, the event has evolved into a central platform for mining discourse in Botswana. Its estimated economic footprint exceeds P4 million, supporting SMEs, hospitality providers, logistics operators and media stakeholders.

The summit's expansion reflects a broader shift in Botswana's mining narrative, from resource dependency to strategic repositioning in global critical mineral supply chains. Across both policy and industry voices, a unifying question defines the summit's direction... what will Botswana build from its mineral wealth? The answer increasingly points toward industrial ecosystems anchored in mining but extending far beyond it. With global demand rising for copper, nickel, manganese and other critical minerals, Botswana is positioning itself not only as a supplier of raw materials but also as a destination for value addition, manufacturing and investment-led transformation.

As proceedings continued over two days of dialogue, one theme was unmistakable: Botswana is actively attempting to redefine the economic role of mining. No longer viewed solely as a revenue generator, the sector is being repositioned as a structural driver of industrialisation, citizen empowerment and long-term national resilience. If the first phase of Botswana's mining story was about discovery and extraction, the emerging phase is about transformation and legacy. And as articulated throughout the summit's opening, the defining test of this era is no longer what lies beneath Botswana's soil but what the country chooses to build above it.

Debswana Signals Strategic Reset as Botswana's Mining Sector Confronts a New Reality

Botswana's mining industry is undergoing a decisive shift, with senior leaders calling for urgent transformation, deeper partnerships and a broader economic vision as global diamond market dynamics evolve.

Speaking at the Future of Mining Summit 2026 in Gaborone, Debswana Chief Executive Officer Andrew Motsomi delivered a strong message, noting that the era of relying on historic diamond success is over. "We can't live in the glory of the past," said Motsomi. He pointed to shifting consumer preferences, market volatility and technological disruption as structural forces reshaping the global diamond industry. At the centre of Debswana's response is its Yamasa Strategy (2025–2029), designed to restore financial resilience, strengthen operational performance and reposition the business for long-term sustainability. The strategy also signals a deliberate move toward diversification, leveraging mining as a platform to unlock opportunities beyond core diamond production.

Chief Operations Officer Koolatotse Koolatotse emphasised the urgent need for change, describing the current market downturn as a defining moment for the industry. He stated, "Resilience is not built in comfort. Organisations have two options: to rise or to perish." With global diamond revenues reportedly down by 23%, Debswana is prioritising cost discipline and aiming for savings of approximately P3 billion while ensuring responsible production levels to protect long-term market value.

Koolatotse emphasised that transformation must extend across the value chain, including suppliers. He said, "It is no longer about what you can sell to us; it is about what we can sustainably afford." He also called for localisation, manufacturing capacity and more competitive supply ecosystems within Botswana. Across the summit, a consistent theme emerged: transformation cannot happen in isolation. Botswana Chamber of Mines Chairperson Mogakolodi Maoketsa underscored the importance of collaboration, noting that future growth will depend on stronger partnerships, sustained exploration and responsible development practices. "Without exploration, there can be no future mines and no future economic opportunities," said Maoketsa, while cautioning that expansion must align with regulatory frameworks and national interests.

Industry leaders also called for bold policy interventions to reduce bureaucracy and accelerate investment, particularly in emerging sectors linked to mining. Beyond production, Botswana is intensifying efforts to reposition its diamonds in global markets through strategic branding. The "House of Botswana" initiative is reshaping how the country presents its natural diamonds internationally…shifting from a supply-driven narrative to one centred on provenance, authenticity and impact. The Ministry of Minerals and Energy's Director of Marketing and Brand Development, Pat Dambe, highlighted the disconnect between origin and recognition in global markets. "Most diamonds are from Botswana, but consumers don't know that. We need to tell a more compelling story around responsible sourcing and national development," noted Dambe.

Moderating the session, Debswana's Wanatsha Moakufi added a pointed call to action: "We cannot outsource our survival." Debswana's diversification strategy is also taking clearer shape, with Chief Finance Officer Ian Modubule outlining a structured investment approach under the Yamasa framework. While 70% of the focus remains on strengthening the diamond business, the company is allocating capital toward commercialising its existing capabilities, ranging from engineering and logistics to infrastructure, while also investing in new, non-mining ventures. This model aims to unlock additional revenue streams while exporting Botswana's mining expertise into regional and global markets.

On the ground, this shift is already materialising as the upcoming Jwaneng Central Business District (CBD) project, set to break ground in July, represents a tangible step toward building economic ecosystems beyond mining. Jwaneng Mine General Manager Goitseone Gadifele said the initiative reflects a long-term vision of sustainable communities beyond the life of mine. "Everything we do is guided by how we would like Jwaneng and surrounding communities to look beyond mining," said Gadifele.

Complementary initiatives, such as the "Diamonds to Mutton" programme, are also supporting agricultural diversification and the development of local enterprises. Gadifele emphasised the significance of local innovation and manufacturing. He cited successful collaborations that have produced mining equipment components and refurbished complex machinery in Botswana, showcasing the country's growing industrial capabilities.

As the summit discussions made clear, Botswana's mining sector is at an inflection point. The combination of global market pressures, rising costs and shifting demand patterns is forcing a strategic reset. The path forward is increasingly defined by diversification, innovation, localisation and stronger collaboration between industry, government and investors.

The message from leadership is unequivocal: the future of mining in Botswana will not be secured by legacy success but by the speed and boldness of transformation.

Boiler Lift Marks Mmamabula Power Project Progress

Botswana's Mmamabula 600MW coal-fired power project has reached a key construction milestone with the successful installation of a 183-tonne boiler drum for Unit 1, an engineering operation that underscores steady progress toward strengthening the country's long-term energy security.

Officials from the Ministry of Minerals and Energy observed the complex lift, which saw the massive boiler drum hoisted to a height of 55 metres before being carefully positioned onto its supporting structure. The precision operation, which demanded advanced coordination and technical control, took close to seven hours to complete, with the component moving at an average rate of 10 metres per hour.

At the heart of the installation is a critical piece of power generation infrastructure. The boiler drum plays a central role in producing high-pressure steam that drives turbines, ultimately enabling electricity generation at scale. Its placement therefore represents a significant step forward in the assembly of Unit 1 and the broader construction of the plant.

Beyond its engineering significance, the milestone carries strategic importance for Botswana's energy future. The Mmamabula project forms part of national efforts to reduce reliance on imported electricity, expand domestic generation capacity and strengthen the country's position as a potential energy hub in the Southern African region.

As construction advances, each phase brings the project closer to its overarching objective, a more resilient, self-sufficient and industrially enabling power system capable of supporting Botswana's economic growth trajectory.

De Beers' Control Tower for a New Era of Diamond Traceability

Since opening in March 2023, De Beers Sightholder Sales South Africa's Sky Park facility has come to represent a shift in how rough diamonds are managed, not simply as commodities in motion but as digitally tracked assets moving through a tightly controlled, data-driven value chain.

Located near O. R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa, the facility functions as a central control point for South Africa's rough diamond flow, integrating sorting, valuation, traceability and sales preparation within a single, highly engineered operational environment. At its core, Sky Park reflects a structural evolution in the diamond business, from fragmented processing steps to a consolidated system where efficiency, compliance and data integrity are embedded from intake to sale.

Every diamond entering the facility is registered, weighed and assigned a digital identity before moving into controlled processing streams. Cleaning, sorting and valuation are no longer isolated functions but sequential stages within an integrated production architecture designed to reduce variability and strengthen consistency in final pricing outcomes. According to DBSSSA Senior Operations Manager Blanche Louw, the facility was designed around flow efficiency and operational logic. Our operation is meticulously sequenced, moving diamonds through the cleaning zones and immediately into technical sorting and valuation areas. The layout of the building is specifically designed to bring optimal efficiencies into our processes," explained Louw.

A notable shift at Sky Park is the integration of sustainability and safety innovation into early-stage diamond processing. The Central Cleaning Plant replaces traditional acid-based methods with safer, controlled alternatives, aligning operational performance with stricter environmental and workplace standards. Once processed, diamonds enter parallel valuation streams where automation and specialist expertise operate side by side. High-volume categories are handled through automated systems, while larger or more complex stones are assessed by experienced sorters. This hybrid model enables classification into more than 10,000 defined categories aligned to De Beers' global pricing architecture.

The facility also strengthens De Beers' Sightholder sales model by consolidating like-for-like diamond categories into standardised "boxes" that reflect manufacturing demand and global market requirements. These are presented at scheduled Sight events, reinforcing predictability and consistency across the value chain. Beyond operational efficiency, Sky Park is increasingly defined by its data infrastructure. Each diamond of one carat and above is digitally scanned on arrival, creating a unique traceable identity. At the point of sale, stones are verified again and matched through Tracr, De Beers' blockchain-enabled traceability platform, which now records the journey of more than five million rough diamonds.

Sustainability considerations are embedded in the facility's physical and energy design. A five-star Green Star rating, combined with a 360 kW solar installation and battery storage system, positions Sky Park as part of a broader shift toward lower-impact industrial processing environments. Taken together, Sky Park represents more than an operational hub. It reflects De Beers' broader strategic direction: a move toward integrated control systems where traceability, standardisation and sustainability are no longer add-ons to the diamond business but core drivers of value creation and market confidence.

Celsius Resources Exits Namibia Cobalt-Copper Asset in $15m Deal with Chinalco

ASX-listed Celsius Resources has completed a binding share sale agreement with Chinese state-owned Chinalco Mining for the disposal of its 95% interest in the Opuwo cobalt and copper project in Namibia, in a transaction valued at $15 million.

The divestment marks a strategic portfolio realignment for Celsius, as the company shifts its focus toward its Philippine copper and gold assets, supported by a strengthened near-term funding position. For the year ended June 30, the Opuwo project recorded an operating loss of approximately N$421,738 and was carried at a value of about N$34 million in Celsius' consolidated financial statements, underscoring its early-stage development profile.

Under the agreement, Chinalco Mining has committed to a non-refundable exploration investment of at least $750,000, alongside a further $250,000 allocated to metallurgical test work, while regulatory and transactional conditions precedent are being finalised. The transaction remains subject to several approvals, including Celsius shareholder consent, clearance from the Namibian Competition Commission, exchange control approval from the Bank of Namibia and authorisation from Chinese regulatory bodies, including the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce.

A six-month-long stop date has been set for completion, expiring on 29 December 2026. Should the agreement be terminated, Chinalco will be restricted for three years from acquiring any interest within a 2 km radius of the project licence area. Celsius Managing Director Bardin Davis said the agreement reflects confidence in the asset's long-term potential and its future contribution to Namibia's mining sector. "We believe that Chinalco Mining is well positioned to progress the Opuwo project, which will deliver substantial benefits to Namibia and the local community," said Davis.

A Chinalco Mining representative described Opuwo as a strategically significant greenfield cobalt-copper asset with strong exploration upside, adding that the company intends to advance the project responsibly from exploration through to development. The transaction underscores continued Chinese interest in African critical mineral assets, particularly copper and cobalt, as global supply chains adjust to rising demand from energy transition industries.

DRC Signs Diamond Marketing Deal with Swiss Tech Firm ADEX

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has signed a strategic agreement with Switzerland-based diamond and gemstone technology company ADEX Platform to market Congolese diamonds through a structured domestic processing and digital sales framework.

The agreement aims to strengthen transparency in the country's diamond value chain, curb illicit exports, and increase local value addition in one of the world's most resource-rich yet underperforming diamond sectors. The signing was overseen by Mines Minister Louis Watum Kabamba, who formalised the agreement between ADEX Platform and the state-owned Mining Fund for Future Generations (FOMIN), according to a statement issued by the ministry.

The core of the deal involves the establishment of a joint venture called ADEX RDC, which will be equally owned by ADEX Platform and FOMIN. This new entity will create a diamond-cutting and jewellery manufacturing facility that meets international standards within the DRC. Additionally, it will develop a digital trading platform to provide direct access to global diamond markets.

Officials say the structure is intended to reposition the DRC further up the diamond value chain by retaining more processing, marketing and pricing activity within national borders. The move comes as the country continues to implement reforms aimed at improving governance in the mining sector and maximising revenue from its mineral wealth. Despite being a global top five diamond producer and Africa's second-largest, the DRC has faced persistent challenges linked to smuggling, artisanal mining dominance and declining production volumes.

Official data shows diamond output falling from approximately 13 million carats in 2021 to about 8.1 million carats in 2025, with an estimated 85% of production originating from artisanal miners. Industrial output remains largely concentrated in SACIM, a China-backed joint venture, which produced just over one million carats last year. Against this backdrop, the ADEX partnership reflects a broader policy shift toward beneficiation, digitalisation and tighter control of diamond flows, as the DRC seeks to rebuild competitiveness and capture greater value from its natural resources.

Illegal Mining Surge Forces South African Mining Sector to Reassess Security Architecture

South Africa's mining industry has entered a period of intensified focus on security, governance and coordinated response mechanisms, as illegal mining, infrastructure sabotage and organised criminal activity continue to escalate across key mining regions.

This formed the core of discussions at the 5th Annual Mine Security Conference, held on 1–2 July 2026 in Johannesburg, South Africa, where industry leaders, regulators, law enforcement and security specialists converged around a shared agenda to strengthen the resilience of mining operations against evolving threats.

Organiser Ankia Roux said the scale and complexity of the challenge demand deeper collaboration across institutions.
"The task at hand is so extensive that no single entity can take full responsibility. Furthermore, arrests within law enforcement have highlighted the reality that crime fighters must remain vigilant against both internal and external threats," said Roux.

The conference took place at a critical moment for the sector, with rising concern over illegal mining networks, abandoned shafts, border vulnerabilities and insider-enabled criminal activity placing sustained pressure on operational security frameworks. A key focus area was the growing risk of insider threats within mining operations. Rio Tinto Richards Bay Minerals' General Manager and Head of Security, Mandla Zembe, examined how internal vulnerabilities can compromise even the most advanced security systems.

Broader structural challenges, including the closure and rehabilitation of abandoned mines, were addressed by Fred Arendse, President of the Junior Mining Council, while customs and border enforcement weaknesses came under scrutiny in a presentation by Christo Bezuidenhout, Deputy Assistant Commissioner at the Border Management Authority, who outlined strategies to disrupt illicit mineral flows at points of entry and exit.

The conference also placed strong emphasis on coordinated enforcement and intelligence-sharing. Industry veteran Thys de Beer of Harmony Gold Mining Company Limited explored real-time collaboration models between mining houses and security agencies to counter organised criminal activity. Community-related unrest, increasingly cited as a contributing factor to operational disruption, was addressed by Max Baloyi of Foskor, while Anglo American's Chandré Klaase focused on balancing compliance, risk mitigation and asset protection across large-scale operations.

From a public-sector perspective, Tembela Kulu of Eskom highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships in strengthening protection frameworks for critical infrastructure. Legal and prosecutorial capacity also formed a central pillar of discussion. The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) provided practical guidance on the prosecution of mining-related crimes, including evidence preparation and improving conviction outcomes. Advocate Willemien Vos unpacked procedural approaches within organised crime prosecutions.

Legal precedent and defensive rights for mining companies were examined by Warren Beech, CEO of Beech Veltman Inc., while financial intelligence applications in disrupting illicit mining networks were presented by Pieter Alberts of the Financial Intelligence Centre, focusing on converting transaction data into court-ready evidence. Security strategy was further strengthened through intelligence-led approaches, with Lincoln Cave of the Centre for Geopolitical Security and Strategy (CGSS) discussing pre-emptive vulnerability detection, alongside Joe van der Walt of Focus Group, who provided insight into adversary capabilities and operational risk mapping.

Two panel discussions anchored the programme, focusing on intelligence integration, cross-sector information sharing and the implementation of a coordinated whole-of-government response to mining-related crime. A technology showcase also featured exhibitors including Quatro, UDS (UAV and Drone Solutions), Safer City Group and Blue Hawk Tactical, presenting solutions ranging from aerial surveillance systems and integrated security platforms to armoured response vehicles and advanced tactical support technologies.

As illegal mining networks grow more sophisticated, the conference signalled a clear shift in industry thinking, from reactive enforcement to integrated, intelligence-driven security ecosystems designed to protect assets, people and national economic infrastructure.

Angola Upstream Slows, Downstream Opportunities Emerge

The Angolan oil and gas industry is undergoing a structural transition, as upstream activities gradually slow down. Operators are increasingly focusing on asset optimisation, maintenance and life-extension programmes instead of pursuing new greenfield developments.

François Bacci, Managing Director of Ponticelli Angola, notes that this shift signifies a noticeable change in market dynamics, which requires service companies to adjust their strategies to a more selective and maintenance-driven project landscape. “The upstream sector began to slow down in 2025, and I believe this trend will continue,” Bacci stated, adding that while large-scale developments remain on the horizon, significant new activity is unlikely to occur before 2027 or 2028.

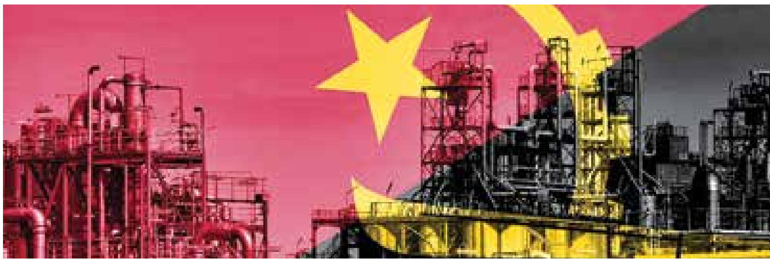
The current upstream landscape is characterised by a decreasing number of EPC-led opportunities available to local subcontractors. Major contractors are retaining most of the execution scope on large projects, such as Kaminho. As a result, subcontracting opportunities are becoming increasingly limited to niche packages, specialised technical work or areas where capacity constraints arise. For companies like Ponticelli, this shift means moving away from the expectation of large project-driven workloads and focusing instead on sustaining operations through life-extension and incremental maintenance contracts. Bacci explained, “We are focusing on several smaller developments to maintain our level of activity in the market.”

Despite the slowdown in new upstream developments, Ponticelli continues to secure work in asset optimisation programmes across Angola’s mature fields. The company is already involved in life-extension projects with major operators, including its collaboration with TotalEnergies on the Dalia field in Block 17 and with ExxonMobil on Kizomba in Block 15. Similar programmes are expected to emerge across other producing blocks, indicating a shift in industry priorities from expansion to maximising output from existing infrastructure. While upstream opportunities may diminish in the short term, Angola’s downstream sector is starting to present new prospects, particularly in refinery development and industrial maintenance.

Ponticelli has previously supported work at the Cabinda Refinery and remains positioned to participate in future phases of both Cabinda and the Lobito Refinery projects. “The downstream is not a new area; it is an extension of what we already do,” noted Bacci. He added that the company remains engaged and ready to respond as opportunities materialise. However, he notes that visibility on upcoming project pipelines remains limited, meaning engagement is likely to remain opportunistic rather than structured in the near term.

Beyond hydrocarbons, renewable energy is gradually forming part of Ponticelli’s broader diversification strategy, though Angola remains at an early stage of adoption. The group is currently executing solar projects elsewhere in Africa, including Mozambique and Nigeria, but in Angola, renewables activity is still emerging rather than established. “We have the capabilities and if opportunities arise, we are ready,” stated Bacci. He emphasised that deployment in Angola will depend on market demand rather than a dedicated project pipeline.

Angola’s energy sector is therefore entering a dual-speed phase, a maturing upstream segment focused on efficiency and recovery and a slowly evolving downstream and renewables space offering future optionality. For service companies, growth will no longer be driven by megaprojects alone but by adaptability, technical specialisation and the ability to follow value across the full energy lifecycle.



Tanzania Courts Chinese Investment to Localise Mining Inputs and Cut Import Dependence

The Tanzanian government is actively seeking Chinese investment to establish a steel grinding ball manufacturing plant, as it accelerates efforts to strengthen domestic production of mining inputs, reduce import reliance and deepen value addition within its mining sector.

The proposal was discussed during a meeting between Tanzania's Minister for Minerals, Anthony Mavunde, and Hou Songcun, Managing Director of China's Oriental Casting and Forging. Steel grinding balls are a critical consumable in mineral processing, used to crush and grind ore, and are currently largely imported to meet demand from Tanzania's expanding mining industry.

Beyond cost efficiency, the proposed plant is expected to generate employment, stimulate industrial growth and enhance Tanzania's competitiveness as a regional mining hub. The government believes the country's resource base, expanding mining activity and policy support provide a strong foundation for developing domestic mining supply industries.

Hou Songcun confirmed interest in the opportunity, citing Tanzania's stable investment climate and growing mining sector as key enablers for commercial viability. He noted that establishing a local manufacturing base would also allow the company to better serve both Tanzania and neighbouring regional markets.

The initiative forms part of a broader Tanzanian policy direction aimed at deepening local participation in the mining sector by encouraging domestic production of equipment, industrial materials and consumables traditionally imported. If realised, the project would mark another step in Tanzania's push to evolve from a primarily extraction-driven industry to a more diversified, industrially integrated mining economy.

SAEIS 2026 Positions Southern Africa as a Competitive Eco-Infrastructure Investment Hub

The Southern Africa Eco-Infrastructure Summit (SAEIS) 2026 has reinforced its role as a leading regional platform for investment, collaboration and policy alignment, bringing together government leaders, investors and industry stakeholders to accelerate sustainable infrastructure development across the region.

Held from 15–17 July under the theme "Reimagining Southern Africa's Future: AI-Driven Eco-Infrastructure for Sustainable Real Estate and Development," the summit focused on unlocking capital for bankable projects, advancing public-private partnerships and strengthening regional cooperation in energy, infrastructure and climate resilience.

The event was officially endorsed by Zimbabwe's Ministry of Energy and Power Development, signalling strong policy alignment with national and regional development agendas. Government participation at ministerial level further elevated the summit's strategic importance, particularly in advancing infrastructure delivery, energy security, and industrialisation.

A central highlight of SAEIS 2026 was the launch of the Investment Arena Challenge, a live pitching platform designed to connect project developers with international financiers, development finance institutions and strategic partners. The initiative, positioned as Southern Africa's first dedicated eco-infrastructure investment platform of its kind, showcased a select group of investment-ready projects spanning clean energy, sustainable real estate, water systems and digital infrastructure.

The platform attracted strong interest from institutional investors, private equity firms and infrastructure specialists seeking commercially viable projects aligned with sustainability and long-term growth objectives. Beyond capital raising, it enabled direct engagement between project owners and decision-makers, accelerating pathways to implementation.

Discussions throughout the summit underscored the growing importance of integrated infrastructure solutions, with a particular focus on decarbonisation, energy efficiency, smart cities and AI-enabled systems. Stakeholders emphasised the need for coordinated policy frameworks, improved project preparation and scalable financing mechanisms to unlock the region's infrastructure pipeline.

The inclusion of a Future Leaders Track further broadened the summit's impact, providing a platform for innovators, researchers and emerging entrepreneurs to present forward-looking solutions in areas such as digital infrastructure, climate technology and sustainable urban development.

With participation from across Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, SAEIS 2026 strengthened Victoria Falls' position as a convening hub for high-level investment dialogue. The summit's combination of policy engagement, project showcasing and investment matchmaking reflects a clear shift toward execution-focused platforms capable of translating strategy into tangible development outcomes.

As Southern Africa continues to navigate energy transition pressures and infrastructure deficits, SAEIS 2026 has underscored the region's growing competitiveness as a destination for sustainable investment, anchored by strong partnerships, innovation and a defined pipeline of bankable projects.

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Ras Tanura Terminal Loadings Restarted as Gulf Export Flows Normalise

Saudi Aramco has resumed crude oil loadings at its Ras Tanura terminal, bringing one of the world's most critical export hubs back online after a near four-month suspension, according to Reuters.

Shipping data indicates that operations are restarting gradually, with two very large crude carriers (VLCCs) operated by Saudi Arabia's national shipping firm Bahri already loading at the terminal, while additional vessels are either approaching or waiting offshore. Saudi Aramco has not commented on the operational movements.

Ras Tanura, widely regarded as the world's largest oil export terminal, previously handled more than 5 million barrels per day of crude exports before disruptions linked to geopolitical tensions in the region. Operations were halted in March, with exports redirected to alternative routes, including the Red Sea port of Yanbu, amid security concerns and temporary closure risks affecting Gulf shipping lanes.

At the height of the disruption, Saudi crude exports reportedly declined to around 4 million barrels per day, down from more than 7 million barrels per day earlier in the year. The resumption of loadings at Ras Tanura marks a significant step in the normalisation of Middle East crude flows, as regional producers gradually restore full export capacity following months of logistical rerouting.

Saudi Arabia is among the last major Gulf producers to resume shipments directly from inside the Arabian Gulf, underscoring the strategic sensitivity of key maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz. The restart comes amid easing geopolitical tensions following an interim US–Iran agreement aimed at reopening and stabilising critical shipping routes.

While full export volumes are yet to return to pre-disruption levels, the phased restart at Ras Tanura signals improving confidence in regional shipping security and a gradual rebalancing of global oil supply routes. As Gulf exporters restore operational normality, attention now shifts to whether sustained stability in the Strait of Hormuz can support a full recovery in crude flow volumes across the region.

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