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# Firm to exhibit mining related expertise at Indaba

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ANDREW VAN ZYL, MARCIN WERTZ AND HENNIE THEART The delegation that will lead SRK South Africa's participation at this year's African Mining Indaba

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CREAMER MEDIA REPORTER



**L**ong-time attendee and exhibitor at the Investment in African Mining Indaba engineering consultancy firm SRK Consulting will showcase the full range of its mining-related expertise and solutions at this

year's Indaba.

“SRK will once again exhibit at the 2019 Indaba, having exhibited at all the previous African Mining Indaba events,” states SRK partner and principal consultant **Andrew van Zyl**. A team of senior SRK professionals from a number of the company's global offices will attend, he adds.

The company states that Van Zyl, SRK partner and principal mining engineer **Marcin Wertz** and SRK partner and corporate consultant **Hennie Theart** will lead the SRK South Africa delegation at this year's event. Other representatives from the company's local and international practices will also attend.

The company states that it would like to build on the success it had at last year's Indaba. Wertz says the previous event provided SRK with a barometer of the mood of the mining industry, which seemed “slightly more positive than it had been for several years”. He states that SRK noted an increase in participants focusing on investment, partly owing to an improved mining environment.

SRK hopes to again gauge the state of the industry heading into 2019 and beyond, as well as network with potential clients, African government representatives as well as the investor community.

“SRK also hopes to engage on the global mining stage with delegates interested in mining in Africa. This will enable the company to demonstrate and showcase its local knowledge and experience on the continent and discuss its world-class, independent expertise and solution offering,” enthuses Wertz.

Van Zyl adds that, having launched the specialist SRK Exploration Services unit in Southern Africa at last year’s Indaba, the company plans to continue to promote the unit at this year’s event. He states that the company will highlight how the unit draws on the knowledge base of SRK’s available international experts who have experience in working all over Africa.

Beyond the company’s Exploration Services unit, the SRK stand will also demonstrate the company’s wide range of capabilities, from exploration programmes and mining studies, environmental- and social-impact assessments, water management and mine closure to infrastructure and energy.

“The Indaba gives SRK an opportunity to engage directly with our extensive network among major mining companies, African government representatives, investors and even smaller operators; this can involve our experience and offerings in the exploration space and extend to the range of feasibility and technical studies we can offer,” says Van Zyl.

He adds that, in the company's capacity as an independent expert in mergers and acquisitions, valuations and related services, it is heavily involved in investment decisions, and the Indaba provides a good opportunity to renew its contacts with investment role-players.

SRK representatives are eager to engage with the industry regarding sustainability concerns, technology, innovation, regulatory frameworks, cyberthreats, social licence to operate and technical best practice, notes Van Zyl.

## **Mining in 2018**

There was a continued – although variable – recovery in the global mining business last year, notes Wertz.

He states that the local industry, in particular, was subject to political changes that bred cautious optimism about the future of the sector. "It is encouraging to see a large mining company like Anglo American renewing its Africa focus and investing considerably in the continent."

The company's Exploration Services unit also noted considerable uptick in explorative projects in Africa during 2018, while SRK also remained the leading consultancy, according to mineral and energy resource development specialist RSC Mineral Intelligence's global ranking of firms producing resource and reserve estimation reports.

However, Van Zyl emphasises that infrastructure constraints, including poor road and rail networks, as well as nonexistent or unreliable electricity and water supply, remain a concern in many African countries, making it costly to do business.

He says “corruption remains a significant issue, especially where there is a lack of transparency regarding exploration and mining rights”, and this can discourage investors whose shareholders and other stakeholders demand high standards of reporting, compliance and risk management.

Community engagement and social impact have become imperatives in the African mining industry, states Van Zyl. He says potential operational disruptions, owing to a lack of community buy-in, are a growing business risk and companies are now required to go beyond compliance with best international practice to ensure sustainable operations.

“As an independent, global firm of consulting engineers and scientists, SRK is focused on providing clients with best practice studies and solutions to allow for sustainable and responsible mining, while achieving lowest quartile cost of production,” stresses Van Zyl.

He says studies prepared by SRK reflect a keen understanding of the technological, regulatory and community context within which mining is taking place.

**“Despite short-term volatility in prices, exchange rates and interest rates, it remains possible to retain a focus on endogenous risks and best practice – managing those aspects of mining that are within the control of SRK’s clients,” concludes Van Zyl. ■■**

### **Projections for 2019 and beyond**

Engineering consultancy firm SRK Consulting partner and corporate consultant **Andrew van Zyl** says battery minerals are very prospective, but clarifies that it is likely that there will be changes in battery technology in future. These technical advancements are likely to cause considerable uncertainty in terms of whether the potential technologies will take off and become dominant.

“Irrespective of trends, it is certainly our experience that clients benefit significantly from initiating technical studies into potential projects – such as investments in battery metals – well in advance of any upturn or price improvement.”

He emphasises that, owing to the cyclical nature of the mining industry, profitability requires considerable foresight and commitment, as quality technical work takes time and resources, as does building a solid foundation for a social licence to operate.

“Despite the current climate in platinum, for instance, SRK is reviewing platinum feasibility studies for clients,” adds Van Zyl.

He says social licence to operate will remain a key theme in mining and SRK will continue to develop solutions pertaining to stakeholder and community engagement. SRK encourages clients to engage more fully and consistently with its stakeholders to address legacy issues that threaten operational sustainability.

Further, the role of technology in the mining sector is also a growing focus, as the industry looks for innovative methods that make mines safer, more efficient and more sustainable.

“The application of technologies from various sectors has become integral to the SRK approach,” concludes Van Zyl. ■■