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## Stop exporting jobs—mines told



by **Lesotho Times** — September 7, 2018 in **Business**

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Keketso Sello

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## **Nthatuoa Koeshe**

LOCAL business people including farmers and transport operators almost came to blows with representatives from mining companies over what they termed “exportation of local jobs” to South Africa at the expense of locals.

The local businesses accused the mining sector favouring South African firms with jobs and contracts.

Tempers flared and the delegates almost came to blows at the recent mining and business dialogue meeting organised by the ministry on Mining and the Lesotho Chamber of Mines.

The meeting discussed among other issues the opportunities available to the private sector and the requirements for engagement to do business with the industry players. The private sector also presented the challenges that they encounter in engaging the mines.

Speaking to *Lesotho Times* on the side-lines of the dialogue, Motlatsi Kompi, a local businessman said there was need for the enactment of a law forcing miners to give local businesses tenders.

“There should be a law that compels miners to include Basotho businesses on their data bases and give them jobs because they are benefiting from local resources,” Mr Kompi said.

For his part, minister of Mining, Keketso Sello, conceded that while the expectation was that there would be several downstream benefits for local businesses and communities, there was “weak, if at all any sector-linkage between the mining sector and other economic sectors”.

“This goes without saying that if that is the case, the mining industry and the business or private sectors are also not where we would like them to be,” Mr Sello said.

He said it was sad that the mining sector continued to rely on supplies from South Africa for third party supplies such as food, protective clothing, waste management, park homes and furniture as alluded to by the National Strategic Plan Development (NSDP) II.

It is on this basis that the ministry in collaboration with the Lesotho Chamber of Mines decided to hold this dialogue for mining houses to present business opportunities to the private sector and all other necessary requirements of doing business with the industry.

“On the other hand, the private sector is invited to discuss the challenges they encounter in supplying the mining industry. The onus is on all of us to take this opportunity to level the playing

field if there are any hurdles along the way of doing business, the business-way,” Mr Sello said.

For his part, the Principal Secretary in the ministry of Mining, Ntali Matete, said in the Ministry’s focus is geared towards promoting beneficiation of minerals and increase participation of Basotho in the mining sector to effectively perform its mandate.

He said the dialogue was a step in the right direction, as it is good to have foreign direct investment but even much better when the citizens participate and enjoy the benefits of the investment in the mining industry.

“Perhaps, in a capital-intensive industry such as the diamond mining, the only other way to accommodate the citizens in the value chain is through the building of very strong business-to-business relationships,” Mr Matete said.

As part of the dialogue, Storm Mountain Diamonds, Lihobong, Letseng and Mothae mines presented on the business opportunities available at the mines.

From storm Mountain Diamonds, chief executive officer, Mohale Ralihariki however, said some of the challenges they faced with local companies were that some companies sold everything, some provided counterfeit or inferior goods

“We also encounter challenges with businesses with no guarantees, some disappear after-sales services while some overprice goods and services or offer sub-standard goods,” Mr Ralihariki said.

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