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Solidarity pats Anglo American on the back - International mining safety award

Trade union Solidarity congratulated mining company Anglo American on receiving an international mining safety award at the 10th DuPont Safety Awards this week for its continued commitment to promoting occupational health and safety in the SA mining industry (15 September 2011).

According to Gideon du Plessis, Deputy General Secretary of Solidarity, Anglo American was the first mining company to set up a formal tripartite safety forum as part of its safety strategy. "This forum was established in 2008 at Anglo American's initiative and comprises the Anglo American group of companies, trade unions and the Department of Mineral Resources, who work together to improve safety standards in the South African

mining industry on an ongoing basis," explained Du Plessis. "The forum played a significant role in the drop of accidents at Anglo American," he added. "Several mining companies have realised the value of the initiative and are developing tripartite models along the lines of Anglo American's model."

The international DuPont Safety Awards gives recognition to companies who, through exceptional ingenuity, promote occupational health and safety. This year's awards ceremony took place in Istanbul, Turkey.

According to Du Plessis, who accompanied Anglo American's delegates to Istanbul as the representative of organised labour on the tripartite safety forum, Anglo American's tripartite safety model is already bearing fruit. "Between 2006 and 2010, mining fatalities at the company dropped from 36 to 11," said Du Plessis.

The trade union said that in spite of the decline in fatalities, Anglo American should never be satisfied with mining safety standards and must continue in its efforts to prevent fatalities. "In the first 248 days of the year, South Africa lost 85 mineworkers in fatal accidents," said Du Plessis. "Almost half of these fatalities (40) occurred at gold mines," he added. "While mining companies like Anglo American can be commended on their share in the progress that has been made, there's still a long way to go before we can be satisfied with mining safety in South Africa."

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