

Mixed reactions to Mantashe's two hats

Reactions to Gwede Mantashe's new combined cabinet portfolio of mining and energy have been mixed, with some saying it will be good for restoring investor confidence and others believing it will be a blow the country's climate change commitments.



Gwede Mantashe

“The appointment of Minister Mantashe to an enhanced portfolio of minerals and energy is a key signal of the seriousness with which the president is taking the restoration of investor and business confidence in mining and energy,” says Minerals Council CEO, Roger Baxter.

While the country’s energy mix transitions away from a dependence on coal to renewable energy, the South African Wind Energy Association (Sawea) believes that Mantashe, with his solid history in the labour sector, can help smooth the process. “We look to the new energy minister to take the lead in the energy transition to help ensure it is just and sustainable, with a focus on building a better energy system for the country, where the wind power sector can play an prominent role,” says Mercia Grimbeek, chair of Sawea.

On the other hand, the Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute (Safcei) says it is deeply concerned about the president’s decision to merge the two portfolios, saying that it shows the government is not taking the threat of climate change seriously, as well as the need to change our energy systems, now and going forward. “We can no longer rely on extractive industries and fossil fuels such as coal mining, and oil and gas, whether it be off shore or fracked from the Karoo,” says Safcei’s Executive Director, Francesca de Gasparis.

“Gwede Mantashe is perceived by mining-affected communities around the country to always favour the rights of mining companies over the rights of communities to free, prior and informed consent. He is not viewed as a regulator of mining for the benefit of all South Africans, but rather as a promoter of mining regardless of the impacts on people, the climate and the natural environment,” says Margie Pretorius, chair of Sustaining the Wild Coast – supporters of the Xolobeni community.

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