



Paraffin Safety Association Southern Africa

Minerals and Energy Minister acknowledges the need to resolve the issue of paraffin safety

The Department of Minerals and Energy (dme) recently held an Energy Summit to review the 1998 White Paper on Energy. One of the major aims of the Energy Summit was to allow stakeholders to assist with the review of the Energy White Paper. The energy summit had as its theme: "Energy security for sustainable and shared economic growth for all".

In her concluding remarks at the dme Energy Summit held recently in Sandton, Ms Buyelwa Sonjica, Minister of Minerals and Energy made a very clear link between the role the energy sector must play in poverty alleviation and addressing the issue of paraffin safety. She stated that; "Our major responsibility is to deliver energy to all South Africans, ensuring affordability, reliability and accessibility. We are committed to making clean energy available to the poorest. We have to resolve the issues of paraffin and its safety." In addition she stressed that "we live in a developmental state, a state in transition and that solutions that we propose must take into cognisance, the need to lift the majority of our people out of poverty."

"I am delighted that the minister has concluded this conference by stressing that energy policy must include the needs and rights of the poor. It was equally satisfying hearing the minister make the very tangible link between paraffin safety and poverty alleviation", commented Patrick Kulati, the managing director of the Paraffin Safety Association.

The Paraffin Safety Association was invited to participate in the summit and Mr Kulati was a panellist in the session on Household Energy Strategy. He argued that the core objectives of the white paper on energy could not be fulfilled without a coherent household energy safety strategy. Kulati showed that even those low income households who were fortunate enough to gain access to electricity were not liberated from the danger of harmful household energy incidents. He presented hospital data gathered by the Paraffin Safety Association in Umlazi (Durban) which revealed that more burn incidents involved electricity as the energy carrier than paraffin and that children suffer the most regardless of energy carrier. He used real life examples to remind delegates that the constitutional right to a safe environment (chapter 2, section 24 of the South African constitution) would remain a dream without a coherent household energy safety strategy.

"We did not attend the conference merely to point out gaps in policy, we attended on a mandate to represent paraffin users and to deliver their demands for action to realise the objectives of the white paper." Mr Kulati provided delegates with a declaration of demands from paraffin users which cut to the core of household energy provision and safety. The declaration, the product of three regional and one national Paraffin Users' Household Energy Summit, makes very specific energy safety recommendations and calls upon the dme to take decisive and urgent action in this regard. The one-page declaration is available from the Paraffin Safety Association offices or website homepage (www.paraffinsafety.org).

"Although the minister announced her department's intention to take mini summits to the provinces during the course of next year, it was disappointing that the South Africans who have the least access to affordable and reliable energy were not afforded the opportunity to represent themselves at this summit. We hope the specific policy recommendations compiled by paraffin users in the declaration will give the minister and her team a blueprint to address the issues of paraffin and its safety decisively."

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Note: The paraffin users' declaration of demands can be downloaded from the homepage of the www.paraffinsafety.org website



Ms Buyelwa Sonjica, Minister of Minerals and Energy discusses a copy of the Paraffin Users' Household Energy Summit Declaration with Mr Glenn Truran, General Manager, Paraffin Safety Association.