

“We must stop being the voice of the voiceless! Give back communities their voices...”

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Speaking during the official opening of the 16th Annual Alternative Mining Indaba in Cape Town, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches General Secretary Rev. Wilfred Dimingu called for a fundamental shift in how communities are involved in discussions about energy production and resource extraction.

He urged that these communities should become advocates for their own quagmire rather than waiting for others to speak on their behalf.

“We must stop being the voice of the voiceless! Give back communities their voices and let them speak for themselves,” he said.

Reflecting from Matthew 14:1-6 Rev Dimingu lamented the manner in which countries are normalizing the abnormal when the continent is in a dire state due to the irresponsible mining activities perpetuated by artisanal mining and some international mining companies. The communities are powerless as those at the helm of power are the major stockholders of the proceeds of these activities.

“When John the Baptist was beheaded and his head was put in a plate, no one dared to ask why John’s head was in a plate but the party continued. We must learn to ask questions and demand answers. This inquiry reaches beyond the technicalities of energy production and consumption; it delves into the very essence of justice, equity, and our shared humanity,” he added.

Rev Dimingu reiterated that the host communities which are usually the poorest in the countries where mining is happening in Africa have nothing to show and usually the marginalised communities (women and PwDs) are the most affected by the effects of irresponsible mining activities.

“Historically, marginalised communities—often those least responsible for climate change—have borne the brunt of environmental degradation, pollution, and resource extraction. As we shift toward sustainable energy, we must prioritize the voices of those who have been silenced and ensure their needs are met,” he said.

The energy transition is often framed as an environmental necessity, but the Indaba stressed a crucial reality, sustainability must be synonymous with justice. As the world races to adopt cleaner energy solutions, there is a danger that marginalized communities many of whom have already borne the brunt of extractive industries will once again be sidelined.

Speaking during the same platform, Adv Thembeke Ngcukaitobi called for an inclusive approach in mining and energy extractive sector which is usually fraught with ecological and social disparities in which the poor are usually at the peripheries of the of the purported ‘green revolution’.

“A people-first transition doesn’t just ensure economic gains today it safeguards the environment, cultural heritage, and livelihoods for generations to come,” said Adv Ngcukaitobi.

Addressing energy equity requires an acknowledgment of existing injustices, an understanding of our collective responsibility, and a genuine effort to foster solidarity

