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MACUA Has Proposed a Viable Solution to Assess the Conditions of the Trapped Miners in Stilfontein

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The Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA), working closely with the affected community, the Stilfontein Solidarity Committee (SSC) and Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), have continued to be proactive in trying to work towards a speedy resolution to the Stilfontein Humanitarian Crises.

To this end, we have sent another proposal to the State in which we explain that MACUA has successfully secured funds to engage the services of a drone expert who will utilise a specialised drone to assess and document the underground conditions at Shafts 10 and 11 of the Buffelsfontein Gold Mine.

The video footage obtained through this drone inspection will be instrumental in providing all concerned parties, and possibly including the court, with a clearer understanding of the conditions faced by the trapped miners. The footage that can be obtained by the drone will serve to illuminate the circumstances underground, thereby facilitating informed decision-making about the urgency of the rescue operation, which has the State has dragged its feet on for the past two months.

Upon completion of the drone operation, it is hoped that the evidence will be made available for joint assessment by all parties involved. This process will be conducted in an open and transparent manner to ensure fairness and accountability.

This is not the first proposal that MACUA has suggested to the State. Our first proposal was about two weeks ago, when the pulley system—which is instrumental for the survival of the trapped miners—was destroyed by VMR on the premises of Buffelsfontein Gold Mine and under the supervision of the South African Police Services (SAPS). At the time, we had offered to lower down a cell phone that will record the conditions underground to help all of us to have a better assessment of the situation underground. However, this proposal did not materialise as the pulley system, which was needed to send down the camera, was destroyed shortly after we made the request.

MACUA remains committed to ensuring that the right to life of those trapped underground is protected, and we strongly suggest that the proposal of lowering down a drone is a viable approach under the circumstances and that urgent action is required and that this will assist all parties to understand and assess the gravity of the conditions underground.

We are yet to hear how the State responds to this proposal but we trust that common sense proposals which advance a speedy resolution and which could save hundreds of lives will be welcomed and expedited without delay.

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