

Respect workers' rights, unions told

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4 Jun 2013

Labour Minister, Mildred Oliphant has made an earnest appeal to the leadership of unions to address workers in a peaceful manner and refrain from using violent words when addressing them.



(Image: GCIS)

Oliphant's appeal came during a meeting between her and the leadership of the trade union federation Cosatu and Nactu and their mining affiliates NUM, Nactu and Amcu on Monday.

"In most cases, leadership of Amcu and NUM argue in public and I have appealed to them to resolve issues in a peaceful manner. They've agreed and I believe that after our discussion, they will discuss the issues the way we've asked them to," Oliphant said.

The meeting was convened by Oliphant to discuss issues of labour relations in the mining sector, especially the recent conflict between Amcu and NUM. She also had an opportunity to ask the leadership for an update of the mining sector.

Updating the media on the outcome of the meeting, Oliphant said she reminded the leadership that while workers have their own rights including to strike, they have no right to unprotected strikes.

"I reminded them the purpose of establishing the unions were to ensure that workers are protected. We've also agreed that whatever challenges they have they need to engage the unions," Oliphant reported.

She also asked the unions to look at their approach as they entered the season of negotiations, adding that government was ready to assist if there were any disagreements so that a strike would be the last resort.

The minister also reiterated that she is a labour minister and was not affiliated to any union.

She further announced that there will be a process of verifying the members of the unions in all mining industries along Rustenburg -- to be led by department's Director-General and CCMA.

The process of verifying will check if the members joined the union freely or if they were forced as well as to check when they left the union to join another union.

The Director-General is also expected to convene a follow up meeting, where they will go through the Peace Accord signed by unions last year.

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