



Anglo American Offers Help To Gold Miners With Medical Claims

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LONDON - ([Dow Jones](#))- Global diversified miner Anglo American PLC (AAL.LN) said Thursday that it will offer to cover the medical expenses of gold miners in South Africa who have filed claims related to respiratory ailments against the company.

"This is one of those situations where, even though Anglo American firmly believes it is not liable, it has decided, as a responsible corporate citizen, to respond to the request for assistance," Chief Executive Cynthia Carroll told at an annual general meeting with shareholders here.

Alpheos Blom, a former gold mine worker, shared his story of ill health with the help of a representative at the company's AGM last year. He said he was suffering from silicosis and that he had also contracted tuberculosis.

Silicosis is a lung illness brought on by inhaling silica-laden dust. Silicosis damages the lungs by scarring, leaving victims prone to tuberculosis and other respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis and emphysema.

Blom, along with seven other former gold mine workers, filed individual legal actions in South Africa against Anglo's subsidiary Anglo American South Africa, but the case hasn't been heard yet.

Further claims were brought forward in 2009 and will likely be heard in conjunction with the 2004 claims but Anglo has been told that the claims are still not likely to come to trial for a considerable period of time.

"I have personally been following this matter closely for some time and we want to try to do something about this," Anglo American's Chairman John Parker said. "In the circumstances, Anglo American - despite denying all liability - will respond positively to Mr Blom's request for help."

In an effort to expedite the claims, Anglo American had already taken the unusual step some time ago of agreeing with Blom and the other initial claimants upon a way to streamline the progress of their claims ahead of any trial date, while also attempting to find an alternative method of resolving the disputes out of court.

Anglo American has now decided to also make proposals to the claimants' attorneys to provide appropriate medical treatment insofar as the claimants suffer from silicosis or silico-tuberculosis.

"This proposal will be made on humanitarian grounds, without any admission of liability," Carroll said. "If accepted, it will mean the claimants will very soon benefit from proper medical treatment, which will continue for as long as it takes their claims to be finally resolved by the Courts."

Anglo American this week also received a letter from an organization called AIDS & Rights Alliance for Southern Africa in support of former gold mineworkers.

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