

**Press Release:**

***Perspective, innovation and positivity: the keys to successfully mastering current economic challenges***

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South Africans are currently enduring an extremely financially challenging – and at times even fraught – 2016. Business confidence has hit its lowest level in more than two decades as the threat of junk status, drought, a charged political atmosphere, Great Britain's exit from the European Union and its inevitable knock-on effects – and various other factors take their toll.

In these circumstances it is refreshing, at the very least, to hear one of the most experienced figures in South Africa's engineering sector offer an unabashedly positive view of the country's future. That may be because Ian Fraser, Managing Director of RTS Africa Engineering, has the advantage of the long view.

"I was born in 1940, and things were challenging then, to say the least," Fraser remarks.

**We have been here before**

Fraser does not diminish the seriousness of current political and economic events, but maintains they must be kept in perspective.

"In many ways, we've been here before. The rand dropped in value overnight by about 70% after P.W. Botha's 'Rubicon' speech. Commodities internationally have crashed previously. Both Fitch and Standard & Poor's kept South Africa at junk status for several years after the advent of democracy," he says.

The answer to the challenges now, as then, is to keep on keeping on: "Down at the 'coalface', we just get up in the morning and we go out and do it," he comments.

In Fraser's case, this has involved building a specialised engineering company with noted expertise in dust extraction, hydrogen generation and boiler tube leak detection.

**Technology that delivers**

RTS Africa has pioneered the introduction of spin filter technology in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent, consistently pressing home the advantages of this system over other means of industrial filtration. The company's inertial spin filters are energy-efficient and extraordinarily long-lasting: it is not unusual for filters to remain in service for 20 years or more. Critically, the modules

achieve dust arrestance through cyclone technology rather than drawing air through filters that regularly become clogged, something that allows companies to economise on maintenance.

Fraser's team has also collaborated with Danfoss, a Danish drives supplier, to develop an innovative application of spin filter technology which enables the modules to serve as customised cooling systems for variable speed drives. With back-channel cooling, air delivered by filters is directed over the heat sink of a drive to keep the device within acceptable temperature limits. This is an approach that offers substantial cost savings compared to the traditional method of using air conditioners to keep the overall environment of a drive cool.

### **Innovate, innovate, innovate**

RTS Africa's spin filters have achieved particular success in the local and pan-African mining industry; and the company has now engineered the technology to meet the particular demands of Impala Platinum, Anglo American Platinum and Kumba Iron Ore, amongst others.

However, Fraser's work also brings him into contact with several other industries, including the glass, steel and energy sectors. He encounters businesses that are struggling, but also companies that are booming in spite of local and global economic uncertainty.

"To give you just one example: we have a fabricator in Pretoria who does all our metal work for us and is extremely busy. So the critical question is: Why are some not able to do it, and others are?" he asks.

"I have to say that I believe the key issue here is innovation. You have to remain aware of what is changing. The minute you let technology pass you by, you are lost."

### **'Retiring' retirement**

Fraser is sensitive to the challenges posed by skills shortages in South Africa, and deeply regrets the abandonment of the apprenticeship. This system, Fraser says, produced superb artisans who made a good living while serving as the bedrock of parastatals such as Sasol and the former Iscor.

Now, he finds that qualifications are often not matched by a capacity to function independently and effectively in the workplace.

Increased mentoring of young workers by those who have a wealth of experience is one way of addressing this dilemma. However, retaining institutional memory will require adjustments in how society views people in their 60s and 70s – and a change in the way they see themselves.

“One of the thoughts I have had for quite a number of years is that the world must stop conditioning people from the time they get a job that they are going to work so they can retire as soon as possible. Retirement is a fairly modern concept, actually. We should work until we cannot work, like people have done throughout most of humanity’s time on earth,” says Fraser.

In addition, Fraser believes that the amount of ‘red tape’ or bureaucracy that currently has to be dispensed with to set up a company is simply unacceptable – adding that business has done a poor job of lobbying government to take action on matters which undermine growth and job creation.

In summary, Fraser advises: “There is obviously massive opportunity here, and we have to go out and get it. There is absolutely no profit or advantage to be gained from being negative.”

***Ends***

**(866 words)**

#### **Note to Editors**

RTS Africa Engineering is a specialised, Tshwane-based company offering innovative technologies and solutions to industrial problems.

Run by Managing Director Ian Fraser since its inception in the early 1990’s, the company offers globally-sourced, quality products such as continuous belt weighers without load cells, laser-based gas detection devices for hot or corrosive areas, and electrolyzers for hydrogen production.

Product delivery and technical consultation by highly-trained staff is offered throughout Southern Africa to a range of clients in industry sectors such as mining, glass, steel and energy.

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