

Harmony Gold looks to green hydrogen, LNG for power

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Harmony Gold is exploring options, including hydrogen and natural gas, to cut its dependence on Eskom, CEO Peter Steenkamp said on Monday, 6 February.



Peter Steenkamp, CEO of Harmony Gold, speaks to Reuters during the Investing in African Mining Indaba 2023 conference in Cape Town.
Source: Reuters/Shelley Christians

Miners in South Africa are under pressure to find alternatives from investors anxious to meet goals on reducing carbon emissions and because Eskom's coal-fired power plants often break down.

"We are very interested to see what's happening as far as hydrogen power is concerned," Steenkamp told Reuters on the sidelines of Mining Indaba currently underway in Cape Town.

Major industries have been assessing hydrogen as a way of reducing emissions, but it is only carbon-neutral if it is produced using renewable energy.



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Alternative sources of baseload generation

Harmony Gold is also investigating using natural gas to generate power for some of its mines, Steenkamp said, even though using liquefied natural gas (LNG) for power will not contribute to its net-zero emissions goal.

Renewable power sources, including wind and solar, are intermittent and Harmony therefore needs an alternative source of baseload generation, which LNG or hydrogen could supply, to Eskom's coal-fired power.

Steenkamp did not give any timeline for deciding on which technologies the company may choose, saying only it is carrying out a feasibility study.



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Net-zero targets

The need for baseload, or the minimum amount of stable power supply to allow operations, will fall under phase three of its renewable power target, which it intends to achieve by 2026, according to last year's annual report.

The gold miner has a target to achieve net zero by 2045 but has yet to give clear milestones beyond its current plan, which includes goals to source at least 30% of its power consumption from renewables by 2026-27 and to reduce its carbon emissions by 20%.

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