**PRESS RELEASE**

Hatch showcases latest furnace technologies at SA symposium

***07 December 2015:*** *The Hatch Furnace Technologies Symposium from 18 to 21 October at the Indaba Hotel & Conference in Johannesburg provided a global platform for the introduction of the latest technologies and innovations to local customers.*

The latest symposium, last held in South Africa in 2010, took place against the backdrop of one of the largest concentrations of smelting activity in Africa and indeed the world, namely the Rustenburg platinum-mining industry.

The symposium concluded with a site visit to Anglo Platinum’s Waterval smelter complex in Rustenburg, which features two electric furnaces of a Hatch design, and where the EPCM consultant has been pioneering some of its latest advances.

**Ashraf Hanna** P. Eng., Furnace Technologies, explains that the symposium was structured around business and technical presentations, with the aim to showcase Hatch’s global solutions offering, which encompasses complementary services and technologies.

“While the technology presentations are on discrete subjects, our main message is that all of our innovations work best when considered holistically. That is the true power of Hatch, in being able to supply all of our customers’ requirements, as opposed to them having to look to an external integrator,” Hanna comments.

**Total solutions**

“While we have very focused technological solutions for specific industries and requirements, when you put all of this together, the end result is a complete solution.” The main aim of Hatch’s technological benchmarking is to ensure that its customers’ facilities are as safe, environment-friendly and as competitive as possible in terms of both capital outlay and operating costs.

“Our key focus is to reduce the total lifecycle cost of our customers’ facilities,” highlights **Chris Walker**, Global Director of Furnace Technologies at Hatch. Walker gave a presentation on furnace integrity and some of the common themes related to premature furnace failure.

Walker points out that while the PGM, steel and ferroalloy industries all have their own specific requirements and unique concerns, the Hatch Furnace Technologies Symposium gives broad insight into a range of industries and applications.

**Innovative problem-solving**

“While the different furnaces all have quite different issues, there are also a lot of common aspects. A lot of innovation arises from solving problems, which is Hatch’s area of global excellence and expertise,” Walker elaborates.

Given the current decline in commodity prices and the constrained global economy, a key focus for Hatch is optimising operations and improving efficiencies. The latest symposium took place under the banner of ‘Get The Most From Your Existing Assets’.

“This has been our big push all along. All the work we are doing is looking at the overall cost standpoint. It is not about selling the cheapest widget; it is about what reduces the total lifetime cost of the furnace,” Walker stresses.

**Power constraints**

He adds that rising energy costs, particularly in Africa, remains the single biggest threat to the smelting industry. This refers not only to the availability of sufficient power resources in Africa, but also the constraints around transmission and distribution, particularly in South Africa itself.

Walker highlights that Hatch prefers to enter into long-term relationships with its customers, many of whom were represented at the latest symposium, which provided the latest updates on some of the technologies introduced in 2010.

**Warren Braun**, Regional Manager: Control Technology at Hatch, gave a presentation on the latest developments in automating furnace monitoring and control, in order to increase the reliability, productivity and safety. This includes introducing fibre-optics in tap blocks and water-pressure leak detection.

**Next-generation robotics**

**Maurizio Darini**, Technical Lead: Machine Design Group at Hatch, presented on some of the latest applications of robotics in smelter environments, with some South African clients revealing that they had already taken this next-generation leap to boost productivity and to help mitigate labour issues.

Hanna adds that the smelting industry by its very nature exacts a high toll on its equipment, and therefore maintenance is key to ensure both longevity and health and safety. “If you are not going to change-out a particular furnace, then it is critical to ensure that it is maintained properly in a safe and cost-effective manner.”

Commenting on the success of the Hatch Furnace Technologies Symposium, Walker concludes that the latest iteration reflected the current realities of both the global economy and smelter industry. “One of the reasons why we have staged the event again in South Africa is that this is the heart of Africa’s smelting industry. I do not think this kind of turnout will happen locally anywhere else.”

**Technology tour**

Hatch is looking at the possibility of a mini-conference or technology tour in future for those global customers who were unable to attend the latest symposium. “The Hatch Furnace Technologies Symposium plays a unique role in bringing customers together in the interests of innovation,” Hanna concludes.

Hatch’s Furnace Technologies encompass water-cooled elements for furnace walls and roofs, electrode columns, slipping systems and hydraulics, feed systems, transformers and buswork, water-cooled tap holes and power control computer systems.

Services range from preliminary engineering and feasibility studies through to process studies, detailed design, procurement and shop inspections, equipment supply packages (furnace, feed and off-gas), construction, commissioning and start-up assistance, operations support, troubleshooting, inspections, retrofits and upgrades.

***Ends***

**Notes to the editor**To download hi-res images for this release, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the Hatch Goba link to view the company’s press office.

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Hatch Goba supplies process and business consulting, information technology, engineering, procurement and project and construction management and operational services to the mining, metallurgical, energy and infrastructure industries.

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