**PRESS RELEASE**

Zutari co-creates long-term solutions for deep-rooted socioeconomic issues confronting local communities

**23 August 2021:** The unrest and looting that recently blazed through large swathes of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng has placed the spotlight firmly on communication and stakeholder engagement in order to develop sustainable solutions for underlying socioeconomic problems that many local communities are faced with. However, the key to success here is to ensure that these solutions are ‘co-created’ with the full buy-in and participation of the communities themselves, argues **Pieter Scholtz**, Manager of the newly-amalgamated Sustainable Development unit at leading consulting engineering and infrastructure advisory firm [Zutari](http://www.zutari.com).

“We do not believe in merely ‘engaging’, but in ‘co-creating’. For decades, many large public-sector and private-sector players have incorrectly thought that merely telling communities what they are going to do secures their meaningful buy-in. However, we need to create the solutions together, understanding their context, concerns and aspirations, and helping the communities, in turn, understand the broader context within which the government or private sector operates, and how all of this overlaps perfectly to create realistic change,” comments Scholtz.

The Sustainable Development unit at Zutari amalgamates six service lines, namely Communication & Stakeholder Engagement, Environmental, Climate Change & Resilience, Circular Economies, Asset Transformation and Town Planning. “A lot of the time a client will approach us with a deep-rooted or intractable problem that they are faced with. From the outset it might appear that only one service line is likely to produce a satisfactory resolution, but actually there are often underlying bigger issues to which the broader team can then bring their larger skillsets to bear,” highlights Scholtz.

The new unit is linked specifically to Zutari’s major drive to create significant and long-lasting impact in the communities where its projects are executed, from South Africa to the rest of the continent and now the Middle East as well. “Our function as the Sustainable Development unit is to co-create an engineered impact,” asserts Scholtz. The rationale behind the amalgamation is specifically to have a much more focused approach towards long-term sustainability, not only for the company, but also for its clients and the citizens of South Africa.

The different service lines combined into the new unit has a fundamental impact on Zutari being able to provide a holistic service offering to find solutions to a lot of the problems confronting its clients today, whether from an environmental or a social perspective, and centred on the main criterion of financial viability. “That is the notion behind ‘co-creating’. It means not simply assuming the solution. That has not worked in the past. It is about bringing our expert skillsets together to understand the baseline fears, wishes, concerns, needs and wants of all stakeholders, and then applying our expert knowledge, together with that understanding, to co-create solutions,” stresses Scholtz.

The nucleus of this approach is Asset Transformation, which used to refer predominantly to Sustainable Mine Closure, but has grown to now enable Sustainable Economic Transformation which can be applied to everything from a manufacturing facility to a power station, vacant land or an informal settlement confronted with severe poverty and joblessness. Zutari’s Asset to Asset Approach takes into account the triple bottom line of combining social, environmental and financial factors into a cohesive whole. “This can be achieved in a highly cash-wise manner that does not compromise on long-term environmental sustainability, the creation of jobs and enterprises, and allowing those communities to ultimately take ownership of their futures, instead of being reliant on government or large private sector players for their long-term sustainability,” concludes Scholtz.

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

**About Zutari**

As engineering consultants and trusted advisors, Zutari co-creates an engineered impact that enables environments, communities and economies to thrive. Few others can match our local capacity, long-standing presence and understanding of the challenges required to operate successfully across various regions in Africa.

We have created an impact across Africa for the past 88 years (1932 to 2020) and remain committed to this continent, making us the perfect partner to those less familiar with working in Africa. We are experienced in international projects and our Global Design Centres allow us to bring world-class solutions to our clients.

As a private management-owned company, our commitment is true and we have vested interest in our clients’ success. Our strong relationships allow us to connect the right expertise, processes and resources to match client’s needs and bring stakeholders that have shared interests together.

We blend the old and the new. We have moved beyond traditional engineering and work collaboratively to integrate technical and creative thinking. This process of co-creation allows us to unearth new opportunities with our clients and partners.

Zutari’s broad collective of in-house, industry-recognised engineering consultants and trusted advisors provide seamless and integrated delivery. This unique ability to offer scaled engagement allows Zutari to solve complex challenges more efficiently.

Grounded in digital engineering, we continuously deliver better results.

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