

# NIEL PRETORIUS

CEO

DRDGold

[www.drdgold.co.za](http://www.drdgold.co.za)



RAINMAKER



Making, not stirring pots

*'This is a company with a well-developed ability to survive, and survival is key.'*

**L**AST year was a much quieter year for DRDGOLD after the fireworks of 2020, when its share price trebled and then dropped 50% over some six months as the gold price soared briefly above \$2,000/oz and then pulled back. Niel Pretorius prefers to talk gold in rand per kilogramme and on that basis, DRDGOLD is still doing rather nicely - thank you very much - with gold sticking in a range around R800,000/kg. The changes made to the company over the past few years and the beneficial way the merger with Sibanye-Stillwater has worked out have greatly increased what Pretorius calls the company's "survivability", and he's sounding fairly relaxed about DRDGOLD's future prospects. In August, Pretorius declared that DRDGOLD was in "much better shape than we have been in for at least seven out of the last ten years". The group could take gold prices below R600,000/kg if required, he says, adding that "the share price would tank significantly but the fact is the business will still be around when the cycle turns". What Pretorius is not happy about is the general state of South Africa, which has negative impacts both indirectly on foreign investment, which the country badly needs, as well as directly on DRDGOLD's operations. What really concerns him is the increasing level of crime and the growing state of anarchy in the country, which he describes as a "clear and emerging risk" to the mines. Pretorius highlights the "wholesale plundering" taking place of the country's infrastructure, which the state seems incapable of stopping. This poses a big threat to DRDGOLD's dispersed and consequently vulnerable operations. What that means to the bottom line is that DRDGOLD will plan its future expansions in the light of such rising security threats.

## LIFE OF NIEL

*Pretorius holds law degrees - BProc, LLB and LLM - from the Free State and Rand Afrikaans universities - and joined DRDGOLD as legal adviser in May 2003. From there he worked his way up the management ranks, eventually being appointed CEO in January 2009. While successfully running a company that frequently operates "hand to mouth" on razor-thin profit margins, he has also proved no slouch in doing deals critical to DRDGOLD's long-term future. The two biggest were the way DRDGOLD built up its stake in the Ergo project as partner Mintails got deeper and deeper into financial trouble, and then the deal struck with Sibanye-Stillwater, which added huge gold and platinum dump resources to be treated in future.*