

# Environment Quarterly

Kwartaalike Omgewingsverslag • Tikologo ka Kotara • Mupo nga Kotara



**Deputy Minister launches  
breakthrough e-waste project  
DFFE employees encouraged to  
honour presidential clarion call**



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& the environment

Department:  
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**G20** SOUTH  
AFRICA  
2025





# 2025



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## ENVIRONMENT DAYS

2 February	World Wetlands Day	17 June	World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
3 March	World Wildlife Day	31 July	World Ranger Day
23 March	World Meteorological Day	12 August	World Elephant Day
22 April	Earth Day	16 September	International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
12 May	World Migratory Bird Day	22 September	World Rhino Day
22 May	International Day for Biological Diversity	1-30 September	National Arbor Month
5 June	World Environment Day	1-31 October	National Transport Month
8 June	World Oceans Day	21 November	World Fisheries Day



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GOOD GREEN DEEDS



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### About the back cover image:

#### Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden Western Cape

Kirstenbosch is a botanical garden nestled at the eastern foot of Table Mountain in Cape Town. The garden is one of 10 National Botanical Gardens covering five of South Africa's six different biomes and administered by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

Kirstenbosch places a strong emphasis on the cultivation of indigenous plants. When Kirstenbosch was founded in 1913 to preserve the flora native to the South Africa's territory, it was the first botanical garden in the world with this ethos.



To use this QR code conveniently you must have a smartphone equipped with a camera and a QR code reader/scanner application feature.



# Editorial: Journey towards sustainable environment



## Dear Valued Stakeholder,

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of your stakeholder magazine, Environment Quarterly.

Just before we closed off March, I was part of the team that travelled to Limpopo with Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts to launch the breakthrough E-waste Recycling Pilot Project in Thulamela and Collins Chabane municipalities. The first leg took place in Mpumalanga earlier this year. It was truly heart-warming to see people from local communities come through to understand the message of e-waste, the dangers and hazards associated with it and in-turn determined to do everything possible to work together to properly manage not just e-waste but all litter in general.

The Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) welcomed community members as they brought in their e-waste. The DM said the PROs would set-up in Thulamela Local Municipality to continue the work. According to the Deputy Minister's speech, South Africa generates over 360,000 tons of e-waste annually, and unfortunately, only a small fraction of 10% of this is properly managed. The rest ends up in landfills, or worse, is illegally dumped, posing serious risks to our ecosystems. "Our waste laws do not allow the disposal of e-waste to landfill. This is done with the intention of diverting this waste stream from landfill for recycling purposes," she said.

The DM added that the proliferation of technology and the consumer-driven nature of our society has led to millions of tons of electronic devices being discarded each year. These devices, from old cell phones and laptops to televisions and household appliances, contain harmful materials such as lead, mercury, and many other toxic chemicals, which can have devastating effects on our environment and health if not properly managed.

What I picked up from the feedback sessions in those communities is that South Africa is full of active citizens who are passionate about their people, the communities they live in and they really want to make a difference. I saw ordinary people who wake up every single day to invest in their communities by organising themselves into cooperatives that collect and recycle household waste. Schools as the starting point for environmental

education are also raising their flag making cleanliness and proper waste disposal mandatory for all learners.

With the much that has been achieved in waste management and education, many rural communities in this country still face the challenge of illegal disposal of baby nappies where these nappies end up in rivers, contaminating drinking water, and at times get eaten by unsuspecting livestock leading to the animals dying. The DM called on South African communities to become proactive and find alternative ways and businesses that can support the proper removal of nappies in order to restore the health and wealth of their communities.

To close off and as you may be aware, South Africa has commenced the Presidency of the G20 under the theme Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability. The G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group for South Africa concluded on 28 March with the aim to enhance cooperation amongst all G20 members and invitees to address environmental and climate change priorities.

As we journey towards the big meeting of the heads of state in November 2025, let's all stay proactive in growing our economy, keeping it green and tidy and raise the South African flag high.

Until next time!

Erica

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# Rhino Rescue: Poaching Numbers Take a Dive!

By Zibuse Nalovu

In a promising turn for wildlife conservation, South Africa has witnessed a notable decrease in rhino poaching in 2024, with 420 rhinos lost to illegal hunters—79 fewer than the previous year's grim tally of 499. This was revealed by the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Dr Dion George, during the release of the 2025 rhino poaching statistics, shining a light on the ongoing battle to protect the iconic rhino.

"Of this year's tragic toll, 320 were killed on state properties, while 100 fell victim on privately owned parks, reserves, or farms. The hardest hit province continues to be KwaZulu-Natal that lost 232 rhinos; however, this is a notable decline from the 325 that were lost in 2023," said Minister, Dr Dion George. Minister George said the significant reduction can largely be attributed to the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Dehorning Programme, that was implemented in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park from April to October 2024. "The World Wide Fund for Nature funded programme had an immediate impact, with monthly poaching numbers dropping from 35 in April to fewer than 10 per month between May and September 2024," said the Minister.

In October, however, poaching syndicates adapted their tactics and began targeting dehorned rhinos, leading to a sudden spike in poaching incidents in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and in that month alone, the province lost 27 rhinos. "Fortunately, the provincial anti-rhino poaching team responded swiftly, intercepting the new syndicate and preventing further losses. The considerable efforts resulted in the province ultimately achieving a 67% decline in rhino poaching over the eight months," said the Minister.

Wildlife Trafficking remains a significant global issue that requires an intense and co-ordinated global endeavour if South Africa is to succeed in

disrupting the criminal networks. "Having started off 2025 by attending a Ranger course at the Southern African Wildlife College, I have gained a better understanding of the scourge of poaching and the difficult work of the rangers in the frontline. As we intensify the fight against wildlife poaching, it is encouraging to see that the work of the rangers, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, and other key role players is steadily gaining momentum," said Minister George.

Kruger National Park reported a total of 88 poached rhino for 2024. This is ten animals more than the 78 that were reported for Kruger National Park during the same period in 2023. Up until the end of November 2024, rhino losses reported in the Kruger National Park stood at 67, but a significant escalation in rhino poaching activities was experienced during December 2024 and this has continued into January 2025. "A total of 21 rhino were reported poached in Kruger National Park during December 2024 and a further 17 were reported poached during January 2025. This escalation in rhino poaching in the Kruger National Park is of great concern," cautioned the Minister.



## Actions and Initiatives:

Both SANParks and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife are actively implementing several actions and initiatives to address threats in hotspot areas. At Kruger National Park, polygraph testing of staff continues as part of the Integrity Management Plan, with the Skukuza SAPS Stock Theft and Endangered Species Unit and the Mpumalanga Hawks assisting in investigations that have linked failed polygraph tests to a surge in poaching in December 2024. As a result of these investigations, disciplinary action has been taken against two employees in Ranger Services at Kruger National Park.

Additionally, information regarding various rhino poaching crime scenes and their modus operandi has been shared with the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment's Environmental (DFFE) Enforcement Fusion Centre to identify connections between incidents nationwide, particularly in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in KZN. Cooperation with stakeholders has been enhanced to alert customs and law enforcement officials in transit and destination countries about illegally traded horns, especially during the peak poaching season in December and January.

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife is also focused on implementing their Rhino Guardianship Strategy, which was initiated in August 2024 and has contributed to a reduction in poaching in the province. Furthermore, the Ezemvelo Integrity Implementation Plan has been completed and approved, and integrity assessments of Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park staff are currently being conducted by an independent service provider. The polygraph testing of 55 Ezemvelo rhino reserve managers and 58 field staff has also been completed.

## Rhino Poaching Court Cases:

Minister George announced significant progress in securing convictions related to rhino poaching and trafficking, highlighting lengthy prison sentences for those involved in these crimes. However, he expressed concern over the prolonged time it takes to finalize many cases. The minister noted that a substantial number of suspects released on bail continue to engage in criminal activities, often linked to rhino poaching and horn trafficking. "Expediting these cases through our courts and vigorously opposing bail will undoubtedly help safeguard more rhinos," he stated.

The sentencing of Francis Kipampa in January, who received an 18-year prison term with eight years suspended for five years, serves as a strong warning to those involved in wildlife crime. "We are not only focused on arresting individuals engaged in rhino poaching and horn trafficking, but we are also targeting the upper levels of the value chain," said Minister George. "This case exemplifies our integrated and multi-disciplinary approach to investigating organized crime linked to wildlife, as we work to combat corruption, money laundering, and the financial crimes associated with these activities. More focused investigations like this are essential as we continue to implement the National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking. We remain committed to the fight against rhino poaching, and I believe that strengthening our agreements and operational protocols with key countries should be our priority for 2025."



**Above:** Poaching syndicates adapted their tactics and began targeting dehorned rhinos, leading to a sudden spike in poaching incidents in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park. **Photo:** DFFE Archives.



**Above:** In Kruger National Park, rhino dehorning is a strategy used as part of a broader conservation plan to combat poaching, alongside other measures like increased security and anti-poaching initiatives. **Photo:** DFFE Archives.



### About the contributor: Zibuse Ndlovu

Zibuse Ndlovu is the Assistant Director in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.



# Deputy Minister Swarts tackles e-waste in Mpumalanga

By Erica Mathye



**Above:** A woman brings in a television box to be weighed for cash during DM's Mpumalanga visit. Photo: Madimetja Mogotloane.

**T**he first electric appliance was a toaster invented and patented by Frank Shailor in 1909 in the United States of America. Shailor was a technician at General Electric when he invented the D-12 toaster, an appliance his employers bought into, ran with and introduced to customers for home-use.

In 2022, it was reported that 89.6% of households in South Africa have access to electricity and just as much access to electronic appliances.

Modern-day societies, the world over are sitting with a huge environmental hazard resulting from the consumption and disposing of electronic waste. Heavy metals such as lead and mercury found in these electrical products are a public health concern because they find their way into entering the food chain, contaminating in and subsequently damaging vital organs and contaminating the food and water.

## The e-waste challenge

In modern day society, the production and consumption of electronic products is directly linked to the quality of life. Electrical appliances improve the quality of life by making everyday tasks easier, saving time, increasing comfort and convenience, providing access to information and entertainment and in some cases, contributing to a healthier lifestyle by features like improved air quality control or energy efficiency, ultimately allowing people to focus on other aspects of their lives.

While helpful to the quality of life, electrical appliances can pose serious human health and environmental hazards.

## The consumption crisis

Several studies in consumption patterns have revealed the existing correlation between the rapid advancement of technology and electronic waste. Circular economy is a relatively new concept that became popular about 10 years ago. The idea is to remove the current methods of consumption, take, make and dispose. Landfills are filled with unhealthy cycles of conservation that have tremendous effects to the economy.

## A ministerial response to e-waste

In response to the rapid challenges of e-waste in the country, Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts developed an e-waste collection pilot project to mobilise South African communities to buy into recycling and the proper disposal of e-waste. Hosted in Mpumalanga's biggest municipality, Bushbuckridge at the beginning of February.

"Census 2022 results indicate that only 20,6% of the households in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality (BLM) had their refuse removed at least once a week with most households (72,1%) illegally dumping in open areas," said Deputy Minister Swarts.

Local residents were encouraged to bring in old, unused or badly disposed electrical appliances to be weighed in and received instant cash from Imbizo partners.

Resident Anna Sibuyi said this initiative will activate the community and educate communities about the different ways of proper waste management and potentially save the lives of children who play near discarded e-waste.



Sibuyi was elated when her e-waste fetched R500 when weighed and also expressed her gratitude to the department, partners and Shoprite Money Market who were on-site to transfer instant cash to recyclers.

Deputy Minister Swarts got together corporations in e-waste management who were able to weigh household products and transfer instant cash to individuals.

### A dangerous new player

The Absorbent Hygiene Product (AHP) waste represents one of the problematic waste streams in South Africa. AHP products include baby nappies, adult diapers, and feminine care products. The AHP products have increasingly become part of our lives. Over the past few years, there has been a sharp increase on the use of AHP products. However, the challenge is to find effective solutions to manage the waste that gets generated after the use of AHP products, especially at the post consumption stage of the product life cycle.

As such, the Department has taken a position to lead in the development of the strategy for designing, management and disposal of Absorbent Hygienic Products (AHPs) waste with an intention to enhance the diversion of these materials away from the landfill sites and protect the receiving environment, including new technologies and existing best practices

Extensive consultation was conducted with various stakeholders such as manufacturers of AHP, private organisations, governments departments and municipalities throughout the country. The consultations aim to obtain credible and grass-root information from key stakeholders directly responsible for AHPs and AHP waste and will be used to share ideas and thoughts on how to address AHP waste in the country. The draft strategy will be published soon to allow opportunities for public to scrutinise and provide inputs. The Department is seeking partnership with Absorbent Hygiene Product producers and brand owners to improve post-consumer management and community awareness on proper disposal of these products.

### What about the circular economy?

The words circular economy were unheard of until about 10 years ago in the world and it seems the concept is here to stay. Individuals, governments and businesses are seeking ways for opportunity and collaboration to decrease the environmental impacts of products. The circular economy is a concept for sustainability and creating less wasteful societies.

It is open to both developing and developed societies through repurposing existing products and sustainably extending their life. This concept seeks to put an end to the take, consume, dispose

method of society. Deputy Minister explained to the local residents of Bushbuckridge that investing in the circular economy could yield financial gains for poverty-stricken communities.



**Above:** Deputy Minister visits the TMAC Wetlands Restoration Project in Thulamela Municipality. Seen here with project manager Pfarelo Ramugondo.



**Above:** Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts donates 100 trees to Chief Tshivhase during breakthrough e-waste recycling pilot project in Thulamela Municipality, Limpopo.



**Above:** Local residents joined the fight against e-waste as they brought in their old appliances to be recycled.



### About the contributor: Erica Mathye

Ms Erica Mathye is the Deputy Director: Editorial Services in the Chief Directorate: Communications at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. Prior to joining the Department, she worked as a reporter and Chief Copy Editor for a number of magazines.



# Kuwana combats pollution through recycling

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu

Waste pollution in South Africa is a pressing environmental issue that is driven by the fast population growth, urbanisation and the lack of good waste management systems. Low-income areas are hit the hardest by the waste pollution problem with millions of households lacking regular waste collection resulting in people discarding their waste by burning and dumping it on the streets, open fields and even worse in rivers.

Waste pickers are individuals who collect, sort, and sell recyclable materials, often working independently or in small groups. They help reduce the environmental impact of waste and play a crucial role in the fight against waste pollution by recycling materials like paper, plastics, metals, and glass, which would otherwise end up in landfill sites.

One man who has dedicated his life to the fight against waste pollution is Mr Zamile Kuwana. Hailing from Mdantsane in the Eastern Cap, Mr Kuwana is the founder of Thandizam Trading Enterprise and Projects, a recycling and greening company that aims to build capacity of the most vulnerable while encouraging a culture of recycling and climate change education in the Mdantsane community.

Environmental concerns, social justice, economic empowerment and personal growth are some of the things that inspired Mr Kuwana to get into the informal waste sector. "I am motivated by the desire to reduce waste, conserve natural resources and mitigating the environmental impacts of pollution while providing a source of income for individuals who do not have access to employment opportunities. I also find a sense of purpose and fulfilment in the work that I do," said Mr Kuwana.

Having managed to recruit more than 30 people, 100 households and three schools in his waste picking community projects, Mr Kuwana says that he finds joy and satisfaction in knowing that his work makes a positive impact on the environment and

his community as a whole. Working outside within nature, is one of the aspects of waste picking that has led Mr Kuwana to falling in love with waste picking as well as the sense of community and camaraderie that comes with it.

Having worked with Mr Kuwana on his projects, Ms Ntombesizwe Ngceza said she has gained a lot of knowledge about the environment from Mr Kuwana. "I loved every moment of working with Zamile Kuwana, it was inspiring knowing that we are making a difference in our communities by reducing pollution and teaching people about the importance of reducing litter. He also transferred a lot of knowledge not only about recycling but about the environment sector as a whole," said Ms Ngceza.

## Advice from Mr Zamile Kuwana about becoming a waste champion:

- **Start small, start now:** One can do this by making small changes in their daily life, such as recycling paper, plastic, and glass.
- **Learn about the impact:** In order for one to be successful in waste, they need educate themselves about the importance of recycling and why it is necessary.
- **Make it a habit:** You need to make incorporate recycling into your daily routine, just like brushing your teeth or taking a shower.
- **Be an advocate:** Share your passion of recycling with others, do this by encouraging households and schools to implement recycling programs.
- **Remember, every small action counts:** Do not underestimate the impact of your individual actions, Collective efforts can lead to significant positive change.



**Above:** Mr Zamile Kuwana believes in uplifting his community by making them aware of the benefits that recycling can bring into their lives.



## About the contributor: Tshegofatso Ndhlovu

Mr Tshegofatso Ndhlovu is a Senior Communications Officer in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate. He holds an Advanced Diploma in Journalism from the Tshwane University of Technology and is an avid sports fan with his favourites being Tennis and Formula 1.



# Journey of discovery and scientific excellence

By Paul Sigutya



The SA Agulhas II Open Day, held in East London, provided an exceptional opportunity for learners and the public to step aboard South Africa's world-class polar research vessel and experience firsthand the important scientific work conducted at sea. Over 38 schools from East London and surrounding areas attended, bringing learners studying marine science, maritime studies, and other STEM-related subjects. These young visitors participated in interactive exhibitions hosted by stakeholders, including the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), and Transnet, among others.

The exhibitions showcased various career opportunities in marine science, oceanography, and climate research, sparking interest among learners. Speaking about the importance of exposing young people to science, one of the scientists onboard remarked, "It is vital that young South Africans see themselves as part of the future of marine research. The opportunities are endless, and today they got to witness that firsthand."

The excitement continued during the public open day, which welcomed over 4,000 members of the public, exceeding the initial limit of 3,000 due to overwhelming demand. Attendees explored the vessel's facilities, engaged with scientists, and learned about South Africa's contribution to global climate and marine research. A visitor from East London shared, "This experience was truly eye-opening. I never realized the extent of the research being done on this vessel and how it contributes to global scientific knowledge."

Following the Open Day, the SA Agulhas II set sail from East London to Cape Town on a Demonstration Cruise aimed at providing hands-on experiences for Members of Parliament, stakeholders, media representatives, and researchers. This leg of the journey featured live scientific demonstrations, presentations by leading researchers, and discussions on the vessel's critical role in polar research, climate monitoring, and maritime training.

Among the highlights was a presentation on oceanography, delivered by Ashley Johnson, Director of Marine Research and Environment at DFFE. His session provided insights into how the Southern Ocean plays a key role in regulating global climate patterns. The vessel also paused at sea to deploy scientific instruments, allowing passengers to observe how researchers collect and analyze ocean data in real time.

Deputy Minister Narend Singh, who was onboard for the Demonstration Cruise, emphasized the vessel's significance, stating, *"This ship is not just an asset for South Africa but for the world. The research conducted here informs global climate policies and ensures that we remain at the forefront of ocean science."*

Upon the vessel's arrival in Cape Town, Minister Dr. Dion George welcomed the crew and scientists back after their two-month Antarctic research voyage. Reflecting on his own experience of seeing the ship, Minister George shared, "As we came through the gate, I saw her coming around the corner. It was absolutely amazing to witness this magnificent vessel."

He commended the captain, crew, and research teams for their dedication, acknowledging the vital work being done in extreme conditions. *"The SA Agulhas II plays a groundbreaking role in global climate research. We are contributing world-class data that informs policies and environmental strategies across the globe."*

He also expressed his enthusiasm for expanding access to the vessel, suggesting that more opportunities be created for the public and students to engage with the work being done onboard.

As Minister George aptly put it, "This vessel belongs to every South African. We can be immensely proud of what we have."



## About the contributor: Paul Sigutya

Paul Sigutya is an Assistant Director of Internal and External Communication in the Directorate Communication Services CPT in the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.





# DID YOU

# KNOW?

**Deepen your knowledge with these interesting facts from the Branch: Fisheries Management.**

▶ South Africans on average consume 6.45 kg of fish per person per year? This is in comparison with Icelanders that consume on average, 87.7 kg of fish per person per year. South Africa is ranked 121st within the group of 165 countries in terms of fish consumption per capita.

▶ The South African Fisheries Sector consists of a total of 3211 Right Holders and 425 Exemption Holders.

▶ Kalk Bay and Hout Bay are the oldest fishing communities in South Africa. Their rich history dates back to the early days of the Cape Colony in the 17th century.

▶ The South African fisheries sector contributes [NUMBER] to the South African Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

▶ South Africa is a signatory to the following international agreements and conventions aimed at promoting sustainable fishing practices and protecting marine biodiversity:

- International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)
- Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)
- South-East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO)
- Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)
- Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)
- Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC)
- Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (referred to in short as the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)).

▶ **A total** 155 515 Recreational Fishing Permits have been applied for and issued online since the inception of the Online Recreational Fishing Permit Application Portal on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023.

▶ A Recreational Fishing Permit can be applied for and issued online at: <https://www.fishing.dffe.gov.za>

▶ The Chief Directorate: Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS) is responsible for ensuring compliance and enforcement in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act (18) 1998 and all related legislation.

▶ South Africa has a 200 nautical mile (nm) Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which covers an area of 1,065,941 km<sup>2</sup>. A further area of 466,879 km<sup>2</sup> constitutes the EEZ of the Prince Edward Islands (including Marion Island) in the Sub-Antarctic Indian Ocean.

▶ There are 168 fishery control officers (FCOs, aka inspectors) to work across the five regions (west coast, southwest coast, southeast coast, northeast and KZN) as well as 164 "honorary marine conservation officers" (HMCOs) acting in a support role to the FCOs, recruited under Section 9 MLRA.

▶ The Monitoring Control and Surveillance Chief Directorate can monitor and track all local fishing vessels inside and outside the country's exclusive economic zone by means of vessel monitoring systems. The fisheries monitoring centre is known as the vessel monitoring system (VMS) operations centre (VMSOC).

▶ The MCS has thirty (30) coastal offices between Port Nolloth on the west coast and Kosi Bay on the east coast ensuring that the entire 3200km coastline is covered.

▶ The MCS has had several successful cases against perpetrators of the fisheries related legislation over the years. two years.

▶ The Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS) has 4 protection vessels that are able to do coastal patrols all along our coastline as well as the Prince Edward Island marine protected area. The 4 protection vessels are as follows:

Name	Type	Technical spec.	Autonomy
FPV Sarah Baartman	Damen 8313 Class OPV	Length: 82.9m HP: 5,470 Speed: 22 knots	12,000nm 45 days
FPV Ruth First	Lilian Ngoyi Class IPV	Length: 46.8m HP: 3,710hp Speed: 22½ knots	2,500nm 14 days
FPV Victoria Mxenge	Lilian Ngoyi Class IPV	Length: 46.8m HP: 3,710 Speed: 25 knots	2,500nm 14 days
FPV Lilian Ngoyi	Lilian Ngoyi Class IPV	Length: 46.8m HP: 3,648 Speed: 25 knots	2,500nm 14 days







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**G20** SOUTH  
AFRICA  
2025

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY WORKING GROUP

ECSWG MEETING 1	<b>25 – 28 MARCH 2025 (VIRTUAL)</b>
ECSWG MEETING 2	<b>14 – 18 JULY 2025 (KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, MPUMALANGA)</b>
ECSWG MEETING 3	<b>2 – 8 OCTOBER 2025 (CAPE TOWN, WESTERN CAPE)</b>



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# Call for collective action for change

By Nelisa Khumalo and Tshegofatso Ndhlovu



**Above:** Delivering his keynote address, Deputy Minister Narend Singh highlighted South Africa as the third most mega-biodiverse country in the world.

**T**he Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Mr. Narend Singh called on Southern African Countries to collaborate in an effort to strengthen environmental action through enhancing the impact of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded programmes. The Deputy Minister made this call during the GEF Expanded Constituency Workshop which took place from 20 – 23 January 2025 in Sandton, Johannesburg.

The four-day event brought together government officials, multilateral environmental organisations, GEF implementing agencies, and civil society representatives from 10 Southern African countries with a focus on the GEF's approach on Integration for Impact, highlighting the importance of unified approaches to invest in global environmental benefits across GEF's focal areas.

Delivering the opening address, Deputy Minister Singh highlighted the urgent need for global and regional coordination to tackle today's environmental challenges. "Our environment faces unprecedented challenges, and it is only through collective action, shared knowledge, and strategic partnerships that we can turn the tide against biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental degradation," he said. This sentiment underscored the importance of cross-border cooperation for sustainable environmental practices that can benefit both people and the planet.

The GEF, has in total allocated \$177 million for environmental efforts in the Southern African region for the 2022-2026 funding period with the Republic of South Africa alone receiving \$49.1 million, the largest funding allocation within the region. In total, the GEF is funding 123 active projects across the 10 Southern African countries, with a commitment of \$553 million and over \$3 billion in leveraged co-financing. Approximately 90% of this funding focuses on biodiversity and climate change initiatives.

Acting Group Executive Project Preparation at the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), Mr Lebogang Seperepere emphasised the importance of partnerships in delivering sustainable impact. "The DBSA is committed to working with global partners like the GEF to address the twin challenges of environmental degradation and climate change. By leveraging our expertise in financing and infrastructure development, we can ensure that projects not only protect our planet but also uplift our communities," said Mr Seperepere.

The workshop also provided an opportunity for participants to visit a key project aimed at sustainable urban development in Johannesburg. This initiative, known as "Building a Resilient and Resource-Efficient Johannesburg," is a partnership between DFFE, the City of Johannesburg, the DBSA, and the United Nations Environment Programme, and is funded by the GEF. It aims to enhance urban services and improve the quality of life while promoting sustainable city development.

The conclusion of the GEF Expanded Constituency Workshop demonstrated the evidence of the Southern African region taking significant steps towards fostering greater environmental collaboration. The shared commitment to environmental sustainability, highlighted through strategic partnerships and collective action, offers hope for meaningful change in the face of complex environmental challenges.



**Above:** The workshop brought together government officials, multilateral environmental organisations, GEF implementing agencies, and civil society representatives from 10 Southern African countries.



**Above:** The GEF gardens in Johannesburg was another location included in the field trip.

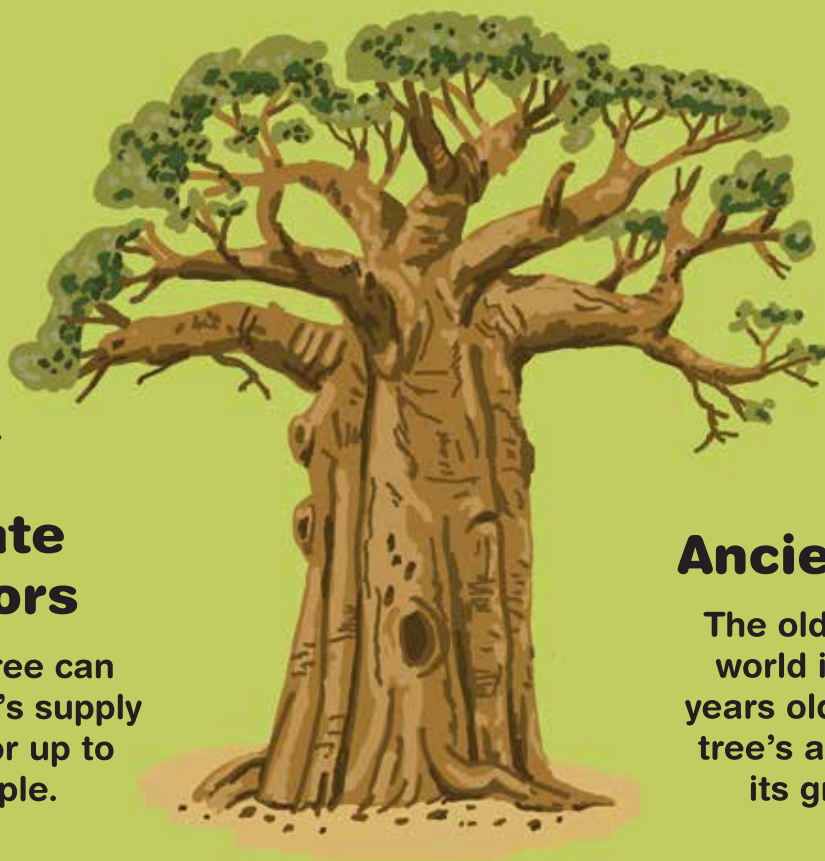


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# FUN FACTS ABOUT FORESTS AND TREES

## **SA's National Tree**

The Real  
Yellowwood  
Tree is the  
National Tree  
of South Africa.



## **A world of forests**

There are  
over 3 trillion  
trees on earth.

## **Climate Warriors**

One large tree can  
provide a day's supply  
of oxygen for up to  
four people.

## **Ancient Giants**

The oldest tree in the  
world is nearly 5000  
years old. You can tell a  
tree's age by counting  
its growth rings.



## **Nature's Calendar**

Some trees' leaves change with  
the season. Is it winter, spring, summer  
or autumn? Just look at the trees!



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# DFFE officials deepen climate change knowledge

By Rhulani Baloyi



**Above:** Ms Delani Mathevula, Control Environmental Officer: Climate Change M & E: Impact and Adaptation with esteemed participants of the 2024 International Seminar on Climate Change Adaptation Capacity Building held in Qingdao, China from October 17th to 28th, 2024.

In November 2015, UNFCCC COP21, President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China announced that China would provide 1000 training opportunities on climate change for other developing countries to help them enhance their capacity in response to climate change, which has been widely praised by the international community. Consequently, during President Ramaphosa's State Visit to China in September 2018, the two nations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the field of climate change. Following the signing of the implementation plan for the South Africa-China Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Climate Change, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China announced the organisation of ten (10) comprehensive training programmes focused on various aspects of climate change. These programmes were held in China and designed to enhance understanding and foster collaboration on climate-related issues between the two countries.

Officials from the DFFE participated in five of the 10 programmes, namely: Early Warning System for All Initiative, Green & Low-Carbon & Sustainable Development, Climate Investment and Financing, Adaptation of Climate Change and Progress of

China's Carbon Market Building and Global Carbon Market Cooperation between July-October 2024.

These capacity building training programmes lend credence to the close cooperation areas South Africa enjoys with other BRICS member countries, including China and it is closely linked to the government's strategic and socio-economic imperatives, including the discourse on Just Transition as well as building resilience to the impacts of climate change. Through the different training programmes, there was sharing of global climate investment and financing practices and China's relevant policies, support for developing countries in improving their carbon market development capacities by examining the interrelated systems of the international carbon market, exchange experiences and best practices in the field of climate change response, centred on addressing climate change and green, low-carbon development and sharing the progress, experiences, and achievements in terms of climate change adaptation in both natural ecosystems and socio-economic systems.

For instance, the Climate Investment and Financing programme provided participants with an in-depth understanding of climate finance mechanisms,



carbon neutrality strategies, and the role of international cooperation in addressing climate change. In China, there are over 800 large Chinese companies which have set carbon neutrality by 2060 targets, especially across the ICT, textile and manufacturing sectors, businesses are seeking to reach carbon neutrality ahead of national climate targets. With respect to Climate Change Adaptation programme, officials were appraised on China's commitment to climate change adaptation, demonstrated by advancements in its efforts to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and reach carbon neutrality by 2060. These bold targets are supported by the Government's strategic plans and policies aimed at building carbon-neutral systems for markets to develop incentive mechanisms for low-carbon growth and encouraging societal participation in low-carbon initiatives.

China's political leadership in addressing extreme weather events was quite evident in the delivery of in-depth presentations and case studies, demonstrating coordinated response through cutting-edge technology and meteorological science to galvanise state institutions and constituencies to be adequately responsive to climate change. Lessons learnt by South Africa through participating in these international training workshops include the need of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change with a view to contribute to sustainable development and ensure an adequate adaptation response in the context of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement.

Together with China, South Africa will explore collaborative approaches to enhance cooperation on adaptation and work together to develop recommendations for increasing cooperation opportunities among the countries on enhancing

adaptive capacity, as well as enhancing their common understanding and approaches to quantitative assessment of physical climate risks. Moreover, South Africa will seek to share best practices and experiences of using available, accessible and affordable solutions in climate adaptation action.

South Africa is prone to extreme weather events such as drought and flooding, thus these international training workshops provided key insights and approaches towards devising measures to anticipate extreme weather events and to be able to communicate likely impacts in a manner that can be understood by all affected parties. China's country experience sheds light on how the country has managed to mobilise logistics to prevent loss of life and minimize destruction of property during adverse weather events. Just like how China has demonstrated, South Africa should deepen inter-disciplinary collaboration to fully comprehend the scale and magnitude of future climatic events, underpinned by early warning forecasting that is accurate and reflective of the situation at hand. As far as lessons learned, an area which South Africa can improve on, which China has excelled on, is around the strengthening of our inter-governmental collaboration and partnerships with local governments who often shoulder greater responsibility in terms of enabling communities and residents to heed and act on early warning alerts to save lives and to minimise economic impact caused by extreme weather events.

The DFFE wishes to express its appreciation to the government of the People's Republic of China for providing these invaluable training opportunities to the officials of the Department, which proved to be an invaluable learning experience to them.



**Above:** Mr Rhulani Baloyi, Deputy Director: International Sustainable Development, gave remarks at the Closing Ceremony of the "International Training Workshop on Capacity Building for Early Warnings for All Initiative" on 09 November 2024 in Beijing, China.



**Above:** Mr Gilbert Mosupye (front row, yellow t-shirt), Control Environment Officer: Africa and Bilateral Relations and Ms Tshwanelo Leballo, Control Environment Officer: International Sustainable Development; with other participants of the Climate Change Investment and Financing programme, held from 01 to 14 September 2024 in Beijing and Wuxi cities of the People's Republic of China.

# The vast seas of possibility: Sabelo's Journey!

By Zibuse Ndlovu



**RELENTLESS:** Sabelo Hadebe has joined the SA Agulhas II as an Engineer Officer, his is a story that is a testament to the power of ambition and the transformative influence of mentorship in shaping a future filled with promise.

In the quaint village of Ezinyosini, Estcourt, a spark ignited a dream that would navigate the vast seas of possibility. A casual movie night transformed a young mind's curiosity into an unwavering passion for marine engineering, thanks to a mother who saw potential in a fleeting moment. We speak to **Sabelo Hadebe**, to better understand his remarkable journey, a journey fuelled by determination and the unwavering belief that dreams are forged through perseverance.

## How did your upbringing in a rural area shape your aspirations and ultimately fuel your passion for marine engineering?

Growing up in Ezinyosini, Estcourt, I had limited career exposure, but my upbringing taught me resilience. My mother introduced me to marine engineering after seeing a movie, sparking my curiosity. Despite being rejected from studying Mathematics and Science, I transferred to a school that offered them. Overcoming challenges, I persevered and secured a cadetship after years of rejection. My journey proves that with determination, any dream is possible.

## Can you share the moment when your mother encouraged you to pursue marine engineering, and how that pivotal suggestion transformed your life trajectory?

One evening, my mother watched a movie featuring marine engineers and casually suggested I consider the field. Her words sparked my curiosity, leading me to research and develop a deep fascination for the industry. That moment changed everything, pushing me to pursue Mathematics and Science despite initial rejection. It set me on a path of perseverance, eventually leading

to my qualification as a Marine Engineering Officer. Her simple suggestion transformed my life and gave me a purpose I never imagined.

## What motivated you to switch schools in pursuit of Maths and Science, and how did that decision impact your academic journey?

Being rejected from studying Mathematics and Science in Grade 10 was a major setback, but I refused to give up. Knowing these subjects were essential for marine engineering, I made the bold decision to switch schools. Adjusting was tough, but I worked hard to catch up and excel academically. This decision shaped my journey, leading me to become the top candidate in the uThukela District. It proved that determination and sacrifice can open doors to greater opportunities.

## How did receiving a bursary from the South African Maritime Safety Authority change your educational experience at Cape Peninsula University of Technology?

Receiving a bursary from the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) was a life-changing opportunity. My parents couldn't afford tuition or accommodation, so this support allowed me to focus entirely on my studies. Without financial stress, I excelled academically, even earning distinctions in some modules. The bursary also connected me with mentors who guided me throughout my journey. It gave me the foundation I needed to succeed in marine engineering.

## After completing your studies, what were the key challenges you encountered while seeking a cadetship, and how did you maintain your determination during those six years?

After completing my studies, I faced repeated rejections due to my age and unconventional academic path. Many companies preferred younger candidates, making it difficult to secure a cadetship. Despite the setbacks, I refused to give up, continuously applying and improving my skills. I drew strength from my passion, faith, and support from mentors who encouraged me. After six years of perseverance, I finally secured a cadetship, proving that persistence leads to success.

## Can you describe the moment you received your cadetship offer? What emotions did you experience after years of persistent applications?

The moment I received my cadetship offer was incredibly emotional. After years of persistent applications, there was a mix of excitement, relief, and disbelief. I had poured so much energy and effort into applying, never giving up despite the



rejections and setbacks. When the offer came through, it felt like all the hard work had finally paid off. I was overwhelmed with gratitude, knowing that this opportunity would help shape my career and deepen my understanding of the marine engineering industry. It was a moment of affirmation that persistence truly does lead to growth and success. How did you prepare for the SAMSA oral examination, and what was it like to finally achieve the status of qualified Marine Engineering Officer of the Watch?

Preparing for the SAMSA oral examination involved focused study, I reviewed textbooks, practiced mock scenarios, and joined study groups. The examination itself was intense, requiring quick responses and clear explanations. Achieving the status of a qualified Marine Engineering Officer of the Watch was a proud moment. It felt like all the effort, training, and sacrifices had finally paid off, and I was now ready to take on greater responsibilities in the field.

**Who were your key mentors during your journey, and what specific guidance or support did they provide that helped you succeed?**

Throughout my journey, I have been fortunate to have the guidance and support of several key mentors who have played a crucial role in my success. Chief Engineer Mthuthuzeli Ntukuva, Mr Peter Paul Ngwenya, Prof. Ed Snyders, Dr Portia Sanele Mkhize, and Dr Theresa Williams have always been just a phone call away, offering invaluable advice, mentorship, and encouragement whenever I needed it. In particular, Chief Engineer Mthuthuzeli Ntukuva provided daily guidance as I prepared for my examination. Despite his own responsibilities as a married man, he selflessly dedicated his time to ensuring I was well prepared, helping me navigate complex situations with confidence. I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and wisdom of these mentors, whose contributions have been instrumental in shaping my growth and success.

**How do you honor the memory of Ms Sindiswa Nhlumayo and Ms Charity Bodiba in your professional journey, and what legacy do you hope to carry forward in their name?**

Ms Sindiswa and Charity were inspiring figures who left a lasting impact on the maritime industry and those who had the privilege to work with them. I honour their memory by upholding the values they stood for—which is mentorship, excellence in maritime operations, advocating for inclusivity and growth in the industry. In my professional journey, I strive to carry forward their legacy by continuously learning, mentoring aspiring maritime professionals, and contributing to the advancement of maritime safety and efficiency. Their dedication serves as a motivation for me to leave a positive impact, ensuring that the next generation benefits from the knowledge and opportunities they helped create.

**As you navigate your current role as a Fourth Engineer and seek new opportunities, what are your aspirations for the future of your career in marine engineering?**

I aspire to become a Chief Engineer and am committed to progressing in my maritime career. I have successfully completed my National Diploma in Marine Engineering, covering the theoretical and academic aspects of my training. The next crucial step is to accumulate the required sea time, which will qualify me to apply to the SAMSA for my Class 2 certification. Obtaining my Class 2 ticket will be a significant milestone, bringing me closer to my long-term goal of advancing through the ranks and ultimately achieving the role of Chief Engineer. I am eager to gain hands-on experience, enhance my technical skills, and contribute effectively to the industry as I continue this journey.

**In what ways do you hope to inspire other young South Africans, particularly those from rural areas, to pursue careers in engineering?**

I hope to inspire young South Africans, particularly those from rural areas, to pursue careers in engineering by sharing my own journey and showing that determination and hard work can overcome any obstacle. I want to emphasise that engineering is not just for those in big cities, and that opportunities exist for everyone, regardless of background. By offering mentorship, creating accessible resources, and encouraging practical learning, I aim to show them that engineering can be exciting and impactful.

With dreams of becoming a Chief Engineer, Sabelo Hadebe stands resolute in his commitment to uplift others, especially those from rural backgrounds, illuminating the path to success with the light of his own journey. As Sabelo charts the course of his burgeoning marine engineering career, we hope he becomes a lighthouse of inspiration for countless young South Africans navigating their own turbulent waters. May his story be a powerful reminder that the tides of adversity can be conquered with unwavering ambition and a heart full of purpose.



**Above:** By embodying resilience and determination, Sabelo not only honours the legacy of his mentors but also ensures that their vision of inclusivity and excellence in the maritime industry continues to thrive.

# DFFE employees encouraged to honour presidential clarion call

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu



**Above:** Representatives from the South African National Parks and the South African National Biodiversity Institute joined Deputy Minister Swarts in planting trees during the One Employee, One Tree initiative launch.

**F**or many years, trees have been a timeless symbol of strength, wisdom, and connection for all life forms on Earth. Trees are critical for survival and health. From the birds up in the skies, the creepy crawlies under the soil, the animals moving across the wild and the forever curious human beings.

"Tree planting needs play a bigger part in human life, it should be part of our livelihoods because we rely heavily on trees. Our young children need to be taught the importance of trees from a young age", Said Deputy Minister for Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Bernice Swarts during the official launch the One Employee One Tree initiative at Environment House in Pretoria on 28 March 2025.

Themed, "My Tree, My Oxygen. Plant Yours Today", the Initiative is a key component of the Presidential Ten Million Trees Programme, which aims to plant ten million trees over five years. Deputy Minister Swarts seeks to use the Initiative as a springboard to relaunch the Revamped National Greening Programme through an ambitious campaign to

plant one million trees in one day during Arbor Month, this will be done through the mobilization of all sectors of society, including public entities at all levels, community-based organisations, NGOs, business, interfaith formations and local communities.

"Reaching our target one million trees is not impossible if we do not just as government alone but if we do it together people from all walks of life be it our churches, universities, NGO's and the private sector," said Deputy Minister Swarts as she encouraged DFFE employees to lead by example by either planting a tree in their personal spaces or by donating a tree which the South African National Biodiversity Institute will plant in a tree bank. Tree banks are dedicated spaces for the planting of trees in Botanical Gardens nationwide.

As the holding country of the G20 presidency, the Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group dignitaries will on June 16, 2025, be hosting tree planting events with young people across South Africa.





**Above:** Deputy Minister Swarts backed up by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's Choir serenaded DFFE employees during the launch.



**Above:** DFFE Director-General, Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala backed up the Deputy Minister's call for employees of the department to lead by example in the planting of trees.



**Above:** DFFE employees together with representatives from labour organisations planted a tree at Environment House.



# Deputy Minister Swarts backs circular economy partnerships

By Letti Mosemi



**Above:** Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts said that cities account for 75% of natural resource consumption and 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

“Meaningful progress can only be achieved through strong partnerships. Therefore, making collaborations between government and the private sector paramount in realising the goals of the Waste Management Hierarchy and facilitating our transition to a circular economy.” These were the words shared by the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), Ms Bernice Swarts during the 7<sup>th</sup> Global Forum of Cities for Circular Economy (GFCCE) workshop which took place on 28 January 2025 in Sandton, Johannesburg.

Deputy Minister Swarts highlighted that South Africa has been at the forefront when it comes to implementing strategies that will ensure efficient waste management systems. “South Africa has instituted various policy instruments and initiatives to advance sustainable development pathways, with circular economy principles firmly embedded in these strategies. These include the National Waste Management Strategy, Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations for priority waste streams and other economic instruments that include fee, levies and taxes to incentivise or disincentivise behaviour change,” said Deputy Minister Swarts.

The two-day workshop which was hosted by the DFFE in collaboration with the Centre for Science and Environment saw delegates from Botswana,

Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe coming together to enhance South-South cooperation for the improvement of the solid waste management ecosystem in the Global South and build the capacity of nominated officials from the 18 African nations.

Since its establishment in 2021, the Forum has expanded to a community of 22 member states, with 18 countries from Africa. This platform is dedicated to advancing circular economy principles in alignment with national policies and priorities. Discussions focus on progress made towards the Forum’s shared agenda and the development of sustainable implementation models.

South Africa remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening these partnerships and advancing the shared objectives of the GFCCE. This collaboration benefits the government through reduced spending while creating green opportunities.

“At the heart of our national efforts lies the constitutional mandate to safeguard the environment and uphold every citizen’s right to a clean and healthy environment. Circular Economy is critical for material supply, security and sustainable economy,” said Deputy Minister Swarts.

Director-General for the Centre for Science and Environment in India, Ms Sunita Narain pointed out that circular economy has been around for ages. “I want to reiterate that circular economy is not just a fancy word for us, it is a practice that turns waste into wealth while reducing litter. We got involved with circular economy because it is a method that has lived with us for ages. As a people of India, we grew up with the concept of turning something used into something meaningful,” said Ms Narain.

DFFE Chief Director within the Chemicals and Waste Management Branch, Mr Kgauta Mokoena shared a presentation about the importance of collaboration and partnership in addressing waste management and promoting circular economy. “Last year in September we hosted the International Solid Waste Association World Congress as part of the collaborative work we are doing together with our strategic partners across the globe in terms of risk management and circular economy efficiency,” said Mr Mokoena.





Above: Deputy Director-General for the Chemicals and Waste management branch (centre, wearing black), Ms Mamogala Musekene was part of Deputy Minister Swart's delegation.



Above: Director-General for the Centre for Science and Environment in India, Ms Sunita Narain said that circular economy is a concept that has been around for ages.



### **About the contributor: Letti Mosemi**

Ms Letti Mosemi is an intern in the Chief Directorate, Communications and Advocacy. She holds a Diploma in Marketing from the Tshwane University of Technology.



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