

MEDIA RELEASE

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THE COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ANTARTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES (CCAMLR) TO HOLD CONSERVATION WORKING MEETINGS IN CAPE TOWN

The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), established in order to conserve marine life and conserve and protect the Southern Ocean ecosystem, is to hold two workshops in Cape Town. The first on stock assessment and modeling takes place from 19 - 23 July 2010 and the second on the ecosystem monitoring management will run from 26 July - 03 August 2010.

The Southern Ocean is on South Africa's doorstep and therefore the country, in particular Cape Town, serves as a gateway to the Antarctic. South Africa is a state that is uniquely geographically positioned, being adjacent to the Indian, Atlantic and Southern oceans. These oceans impact directly on South Africa's national climate, weather and coastline. South Africa, a full member of CCAMLR, has long participated in conservation in the area through the South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP) and the research station on Marion Island. South Africa's research presence on the Antarctic continent and Marion Island relate primarily to physics, weather and biodiversity.

The hosting of these international working group workshops will contribute to South Africa being acknowledged as a significant stakeholder in understanding and conserving high seas areas that impact the national climate and coastline. Scientists from the Departments of Environmental Affairs and Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries will also be able to participate in research working group workshops.

The conservation and protection of the Antarctic and Southern Oceans around it, was formally recognised upon the creation of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959 and signed by twelve nations, including South Africa. The Treaty contains fourteen articles dealing, in essence, with the use of the area for:

- a) scientific discovery and cooperation
- b) environmental and ecosystem protection
- c) conservation of plants and animals
- d) preservation of historical sites
- e) designation and management of protected areas.

Serious concerns were raised by nations about the conservation and protection of the ecosystem during the 1970s as a result of the exploitation of marine resources and the impacts thereof. As an example, it was realised that the conservation of krill (a planktonic organism of the ocean environment), an integral component and fundamental constituent of the ecosystem, was vital to the maintenance of the system and its recovery.

South Africa contributes data to CCAMLR on environmental and biodiversity research conducted in Marion Island by the Department of Environmental Affairs. The data collected by DEA scientists relates to understanding the dynamics of Climate Change in the Southern Ocean and its impacts on marine biodiversity as well as seabird populations and their long-term trends.

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