



Appendix 2: Minister's Keynote Address

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF WATER & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS BUYELWA SONJICA, DELIVERED AT THE PEOPLE AND PARKS CONFERENCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Programme Director,
Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs: Mme Rejoice Mabudafhasi
The Vice Chancellor of the University of Zululand, Prof Fikile Mazibuko,
The Mayor of Umhalthuze Municipality, Mayor Zakele Mnqayi,
Amakhosi
Honourable members of the Portfolio Committees - Chairperson (Mr. O. Singh)
Chairperson of, Board Members and CEOs of our conservation entities represented,
Prof Nevhutanga – Chairperson of the National Lotteries Board
Pick In Pay: Mr. Gareth Ackerman
International delegates (Mr Ashish Kotari from India, and Ms Refiloe Ntoshi from Lesotho)
Members of the media
Ladies and gentleman

I have been asked to address the issue of transformation in the biodiversity and conservation within the environment portfolio of our country.

Transformation in our country is central to the attainment of an inclusive economic development that takes into cognisance the role of ordinary South Africans and that benefits of such transformation are realised by all.

The political liberation we realised in 1994 would amount to nothing unless we address the issue of economic development and participation of all our people in the biodiversity and conservation sector, which to us is integral to ensuring that the Green Economy remains central to job-creation and to propel the country into a green future.

A bit of background and history would come in handy to understand the context of our debate and relevance to this august gathering.

"In 1955 various liberation movements gathered in Kliptown to craft the way forward in the midst of apartheid system that had rendered the indigenous people of this country as mere labourers.

It was this same gathering that saw the emergence of the Freedom Charter as but *one* of many key decisions.

It contained an important decision which articulated the following; "*The people shall govern*". It is in this context that I would like us to always place our people at the centre of all the policies and programmes of government for them to *have* relevance and be responsive to our people's needs and plight.

Hence this programme People and Parks!

We host this Conference as we ready ourselves for the 10th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that will be held in Nagoya, Japan.



Among some of the areas of focus for this gathering is the adoption of an international regime on access and benefits sharing whose negotiations are at a critical stage,

Biodiversity and conservation will play a crucial role in the development of a green economy. Informed by government's commitment to a new growth path in the form of a green economy, we will use this international platform to advance positions that support a move towards implementation of economic instruments, including where appropriate, market-based mechanisms for biodiversity conservation. New and innovative financial instruments, particularly those targeted at the poor, need to be developed.

We will advocate that recommendation that entail new financial incentive mechanisms that mobilise both public and private investment in biodiversity conservation and restoration will be supported.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is anchored on three key objectives namely the conservation, sustainable use of biological diversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of these resources. South Africa subscribes to these three key objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Sustainable utilisation of natural resources is at the forefront of South Africa's approach to development as articulated in the National Strategy Sustainable Development.

South Africa is proud to be part of the world community that celebrates 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. The celebration should be more relevant to us as a country that is ranked the fifth largest home to biodiversity in the whole world and is well endowed with natural wealth resources which include a vast array of plants, animals, scenic rivers and mountains unspoiled forests, parks and ecosystems amongst others. However, unless these majestic beauties of our land are shared with all our people our fruits of liberation will not reach the poorest of the poor.

One of our primary objectives is ecological sustainability; protected areas play a significant role in socio-economic development especially in rural areas, while also contributing to South Africa's overall development goals.

With the dawn of democracy in 1994, "and the' passing of new laws, our government has introduced the economic system of shareholding which allows rural people to play a critical role. This is integral towards ensuring that governments priority of rural development is also attained.

Gone are the days when the environmentalist were viewed as obstructing development, for we believe strongly that the environment portfolio has a substantial role to play in economic development and ensuring that as we grow our economy we do so in a manner that is sustainable and pro-green.

Although the Biodiversity White Paper of 1997 did not necessarily address transformation issues per se, it set out a number of goals, strategies and priorities for conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing.

For instance, Goal 4 identified the lack of capacity in the sector and proposed that this be addressed to enhance biodiversity conservation and to manage its use and to address factors threatening it. It was further acknowledged that women, and rural women in particular, .play a



vital role in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and should be involved in all decision-making processes.

The institution of land restitution process saw thousands of black people claiming ownership of land, with much of that land falling within protected areas.

Previously communities were excluded from playing a role in protecting the environment. Successful land claims presented new economic opportunities for the claimants who had been moved away from their land. The government is now faced with the challenge of seeing that previously disadvantaged people are supported and advised to ensure that they get the benefits they deserve whilst upholding their conservation mandates.

Access and benefit sharing (ASS) in the Protected Areas Act emphasises the need for redress and the importance of equitable access to natural resources, protected areas, information, support for the purposes of enhancing the livelihoods of rural communities. Rural communities and holders of traditional knowledge are often key stakeholders in these agreements and initiatives.

Today our people are becoming shareholders and new practices for Protected Areas are being created which are allowing rural people to play a critical role. The Protected Areas Act makes provision for the People and Parks Programme and makes it possible for co-management agreements to be forged between claimant and authorities.

Claimants that are now land owners are enjoying shared rights with park authorities. The formation of these agreements is proving to be a challenge and attention needs to be paid to providing support and increasing resources to facilitate this.

In 2007 the then Ministers of Environmental Affairs and Land Affairs concluded an agreement that provides a mechanism to facilitate amongst others:

- A co-operative approach to resolution of land claims within Protected Areas
- Environmental protection of Protected Areas under claim
- Optimum participation and benefit sharing of claimants and communities

We are immensely proud of some of the successes we have been able to record which have resulted in among others, the National Co-Management Framework. The Program of Work on Protected Areas under the Convention on Biological Diversity encourages state parties to recognize and develop a broad range of protected area governance to reduce biodiversity loss and attainment of Millennium Development Goals.

It further advocates for legislating participation of local communities to promote equitable sharing of benefits. The overall objective is to ensure effective redress of land rights, integrated development and long lasting economic opportunities and a better quality of life.



It also provides a harmonized uniform guideline for conservation authorities and successful restitution claimants who want to enter a structured co-operation arrangement for the management of protected areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am happy to announce that we approved the national co-management framework in March this year and we will be launching it here in partnership with Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

The co-management framework articulates a number of important principles which must be observed if the parties want to reap a mutually beneficial partnership.

It is also encouraging to note that processes are underway in the hunting industry to transform without too much pressure from the government. It is clear that the industry is aware of the need for transformation and they are willing to make it happen.

The professional hunting industry on its own is responsible for the generation of substantial income in foreign revenue. For the 2007 hunting season, a total income of approximately R650 million was realized. This industry, which is based on the country's rich fauna, has therefore been identified as providing a potential platform for broadening the participation of local communities in economic activities.

We will be publishing Hunting Norms and Standards soon to ensure that hunting adheres to the principles of sustainable utilisation of resources, takes place lawfully and is regulated uniformly throughout the country, among others.

As government, we will provide guidance and the focus of the transformation efforts should be expanded beyond male domination and training, to include Previously Disadvantaged Individuals to establish and own shares in the current industry and women in particular.

The Protected Areas Act provisions oblige us to establish the People and Parks Programme which further compelled our department to introduce co-management agreements in parks to be forged between claimants and authorities. This is evidence of local economic development which is rooted in the communities with the dividends accrued shared with the affected communities.

Although we have already begun the process, we are still not satisfied with the number of communities benefiting. With our biodiversity richness ranked fifth in the world, I'm disappointed that we have such a small number of beneficiaries.

Mother Nature has given us these resources to counter the onslaught of poverty. It is up to us to use these natural resources sustainably whilst ensuring the benefits trickle down to communities, especially rural communities. As a department, we need to double our efforts to ensure that in the next conference in 2012 the number of benefitting communities should have increased, at least ten times.

To achieve this, we need to resolve the challenges experienced today by studying the best practices in order to find effective ways to provide support.



We also noted the lack of capacity in the sector is an impediment that should be addressed as a matter of urgency. We further acknowledge the absence of women in the sector and we need them to play a vital role in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and their involvement in all decision-making processes.

We have identified the biggest problem in the management of biodiversity as the plethora of institutions dealing with conservation and the department may consider reviewing the roles of the entities and rationalize them to bring about effective management.

In our country about eighteen institutions are managing biodiversity with five national based and thirteen being provincial. This has led to gross ineffectiveness and excessive costs. In the meantime, the department will engender uniform approach by encouraging streamlined reporting to MECs in provinces and the Minister for national institutions.

A Biodiversity Charter will be required to guide stakeholders on the appropriate way of conducting business. This means that as partners with private sector and NGOs we should develop and implement a Biodiversity Charter, or Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBEE) scorecard to address transformation and BBEE in the sector.

Provision was made in the Biodiversity Act to develop a National Biodiversity Framework (NBF) which provides for an integrated, coordinated and uniform approach to biodiversity management. The NBF is in the process of identifying activities to be implemented in the next five years to address transformation in the biodiversity sector.

Needless to say, we have challenging assignments ahead of us to ensure that all problems identified in this conference are addressed and that we should deal with completely new challenges in two years time.

After this conference I know that we must be better informed as a country for coming Nagoya Conference.

I express appreciation to the Director General and all of the departmental officials for their leadership.