



## 1 TAKING THE PEOPLE AND PARKS PROGRAMME FORWARD

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The fourth people and parks conference was closed on Day 4 with a detailed response to the conference discussions by the honourable Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Mme Rejoice Mabudafhasi. The honourable Deputy Minister introduced her concluding remarks by noting three important achievements of the fourth people and parks conference:

1. Clear presentations of **community concerns** and frustrations regarding the slow pace of implementation of People and Parks Programmes;
2. **Site visits** to three people and parks projects in KZN to share learning's with all delegates from successful People and Parks Programmes and demonstrate the value in sharing best practice learning across provinces;
3. **International best practice** presentations to assist delegates to locate their challenges and successes in relation to a broader international context.

The honourable Deputy Minister outlined the five proposed thematic areas discussed during the conference as being crucial to the success of people and parks issues and commended delegates on preparing practical recommendations to address these thematic areas during the parallel discussions on Day 2 of the conference.

The honourable Deputy Minister also noted the importance of engaging with communities concerns. She noted that although ground has been covered since the 2008 conference in Mafikeng, North-West, the challenges remains daunting. In this regard, the honourable Deputy Minister sympathized with community frustration and even the loss of patience demonstrated by communities. The slow pace of implementation of the programme remains a challenge to all concerned and the department committed to finding ways to improve the benefits to communities.

Based on these concerns the honourable Deputy Minister presented on behalf of the Department of Environmental Affairs a list of commitments to this conference and the communities who await its results with keen interest back home:

The department committed to:

1. To work towards the promotion of healthy and sound relations amongst all the parties to the People and Parks Programme as in communities, the government and the agencies and individual parks, by working towards the following goals:
  - 1.1. Promoting the **equal status** of all the parties. This will ensure that communities are not treated as mere subject in the tripartite relationship but are recognised as partners deserving respect and full participations in all matter that affect their interest as per the program,



- 1.2. To position the Department of Environmental Affairs, as an institution, to **take full responsibility** for the coordination, policy development and support that is bestowed on it by the laws of the country and relevant international treaties. As such we recognise the urgent need to beef up the organisational capacity of the department in this regard,
  - 1.3. To facilitating the **capacity building** efforts that will ensure that each party plays its role to the best of its ability. Notably, such efforts must be biased towards affirming community structures, leaders and key personnel at all levels and ensuring that they play their full role in the matters affecting their interests across the country,
2. The **mobilisation of resources** (including financial) to help unlock the many blockages that have frustrated the best efforts amongst the parties. Our efforts will be aimed at achieving the following:
    - 2.1. Engaging the **SRPP** component of the Department in streamlining and leveraging dedicated funding for the People and Parks Programme,
    - 2.2. Mobilising **additional funding** from the private sector and possible sources of funding through partnerships,
    - 2.3. To engage Parks Agencies in creative ways of **leveraging existing funding** and business models (including procurement policies and practices) for the greater good of the programme,
3. To build a strong and people and parks **structures** (for coordination and implementation purposes) at all levels to ensure the meaningful engagement and participation of parties in all activities based on the principles of corporate governance and respect for each other's role,
  4. To further explore the model of **community support** that was presented by Mpumalanga during the conference as a best practice for community support and engage all other provinces with a view to sharing Mpumalanga's best practices and adopting broad guidelines for supporting communities. Once adopted, the National Department of Environmental Affairs will be charged with the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the guidelines,
  5. To build on the successes of the **Kids and Parks** programme and mainstream it within the broader People and Parks Programme. This will be achieved by:
    - 5.1. Rolling out the project **nationally** beyond the national parks,
    - 5.2. Implementing **capacity building** programmes that will ensure that all agencies are well prepared to play their full roles and to draw the attendant benefits from the programme,
    - 5.3. To extend the programme to address **other special groups** such as youth, women, disabled people, etc



6. To undertake nationwide **feasibility studies** within the protected areas sector by focusing on the following critical operational areas:
  - 6.1. Detailed assessment of the protected areas **budgetary issues**,
  - 6.2. **Human resources** capacity,
  - 6.3. Management effectiveness**
7. To use **Resource Africa's** theatre team as ambassadors of the people and Park brand and for the purpose of popularising it within parks communities and nationally,
8. To convene a national **People and Parks Coordinating Forum** constituted by the National Department of Environmental Affairs, the Community Representatives Executive Committee, Provincial Departments and Agencies to achieve the following broad objectives:
  - 8.1. To **review the resolutions** of the previous people and parks conference with a view to highlighting critical and strategic decisions whose implementation is still outstanding or remains incomplete,
  - 8.2. To find creative ways of **enforcing the implementation** of the previous conferences resolutions,
  - 8.3. To facilitate the **development** of the People and Parks brand and its **marketing** strategy,
  - 8.4. To place the People and Parks Programme firmly on the **higher level of governance** including cabinet,
  - 8.5. To draw up and adopt a People and **Parks Programme of Action** based on the outcomes of this conference and previous ones (where implementation is incomplete or outstanding)

The honourable Deputy Minister closed the conference with these commitments and encouraged everyone, including communities and government departments, to work together to achieve more!