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## Summit discusses a greener future SA

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THE government is set to take a strong stance against companies that produce emissions which are harmful to the environment, Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk said yesterday.

Along with other countries, SA is under pressure to curb its greenhouse gas emissions as a measure to mitigate the threat of climate change. With about 90% of the country's electricity derived from coal, SA is a major emitter of carbon dioxide.

Speaking at a climate-change summit yesterday, Van Schalkwyk said business was a key partner in the creation of the "low-carbon economy".

"But I do get the impression that in some quarters, business does not yet fully appreciate the implications of the developing world's commitment to a substantial deviation below baseline emission trajectories in a measurable, reportable and verifiable way."

He said the environmental affairs and tourism department had "initiated a process of developing greenhouse gas measurement, monitoring and reporting regulations that will shift our work in this regard from a voluntary to a mandatory level".

But Jerry Vilakazi, CEO of Business Unity SA (Busa), said there was a need to encourage voluntary initiatives.

"Industry-led global sector initiatives, public and private innovation and deployment of new technologies as well as the benefits of public-private partnerships need to be given increased attention," Vilakazi said.

A number of Busa member companies had participated in a carbon disclosure project — a survey of companies about the risks and opportunities presented by climate change.

Vilakazi said energy planning should be an integral part of the climate-change response "given the fact that energy generation and consumption accounts for more than 60% of our greenhouse gas emissions".

Also speaking at the summit, President Kgalema Motlanthe said that, like the continuing global economic crisis, climate change "is largely a crisis that is not of our making". Motlanthe said acting on climate change presented an opportunity to overcome the challenges of the global economic crisis through investment in job-creating and sustainable "green growth".

He said poor communities were the most vulnerable to climate change.