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# SUMMIT NEWS



CLIMATE CHANGE  
SUMMIT  
2009

The daily newsletter of the National Climate Change Response Policy Development Summit, Gallagher Conventions Centre, Midrand, Gauteng, compiled by the Summit Organising Committee.

*Tuesday, 3 March 2009 – Background Information Edition*

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## Climate Change Science in South Africa

Global change science has a considerable history in South and southern Africa. This field of science is multi-disciplinary, inherently diverse, and ranges from the study of physical atmospheric processes, through biological and ecological responses and feedbacks, to interactions with human society and economic activities. South African scientists have played an important role in raising awareness of this field of study, and its importance for developing regional, national and local responses to the threat of climate change. In this regard, a series of scientific conferences has been held on this topic, beginning with a national workshop in 1987 (“Long term data series relating to South Africa’s renewable resources”), followed by several national conferences and co-ordinated research activities. In 1989 the national conference on “Geosphere-Biosphere Change in Southern Africa” was held at University of Cape Town, and in 1995 the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP) supported a regional conference “Global environmental change: Implications for southern Africa” at the CSIR in Pretoria. In the late 1990’s, many South African scientists contributed to the SA Country Study on Climate Change, and in 2003 the conference “Global change and regional sustainability” was held at Kirstenbosch in Cape Town.

These activities, together with ambitious regional multi-national scientific studies, such as the SAFARI and SAFARI 2000 studies of regional atmospheric impacts of natural and human-caused fires in southern Africa,

raised awareness of global environmental change.

Ongoing research has also provided information for national negotiating teams involved in deliberations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These activities informed the drafting of the Initial National Communication – submitted to the UNFCCC in 2003, and the National Climate Change Response Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in September 2004 - providing a framework for climate change response in South Africa.

## The 2005 National Climate Change Conference

However, it is recognized that scientific meetings and activities must actively engage with the world of stakeholders and affected parties.

Thus it was decided in 2005 to combine a focused science meeting with a meeting of stakeholders in a consultative program, encouraging mutual interaction and exchange of information to allow a deeper understanding both of the science and its uncertainties, and the concerns of those potentially affected. For this reason, key scientific inputs were canvassed from scientists from a wide range of disciplines and regions, and merged into an exciting and innovative program to allow productive interaction with stakeholders in a consultative framework. To this end many mainstream national and international scientists who had published their work in high impact journals such as *Nature* and *Science* were included in the science program. Contributors included the Royal Society / Natural History Museum; the South African National Botanical Institute; the University of Western

Cape and the University of Cape Town. Although it was obviously not feasible to include each and every scientist in this exercise, the aim was to provide a window on the developing science of global change and its uncertainties, specifically with reference to Africa.

The 2005 National Climate Change Conference was held from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2005 in Midrand, Gauteng.

With acknowledged experts from around the world presenting their work, the conference offered policy makers, policy shapers and scientists a unique opportunity to interact and formulate appropriate responses to what is likely to be the greatest threat to humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The event was hosted by departments of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and Science and Technology and supported by the departments of Minerals and Energy Affairs; Agriculture; Water Affairs and Forestry and Foreign Affairs

The Conference was organised under the auspices of an Inter-Ministerial Committee of Cabinet, chaired by the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and including as the core Ministers the Ministers of Water Affairs & Forestry, Science & Technology, Minerals & Energy, and Agriculture & Land Affairs.

In addition, broad stakeholder involvement in the planning of the Climate Change Conference was ensured through the engagement of the National Climate Change Committee (NCCC), a multi-stakeholder forum set up to guide the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) on matters relating to climate change. Stakeholders from the NGO and business communities welcomed

the conference and made use of the conference facilities by hosting their own side-events and exhibition stands.

The programme of the consultative conference was developed to allow for informal discussion, debate, and feedback from the scientific conference. A broad range of issues was therefore up for discussion, as was their impact on South African climate change policy.

This combination of science and policy meetings was an innovative and ground-breaking initiative which brought scientists, politicians, NGOs, business and industry and other stakeholders into the same venue to discuss and deliberate on the urgency and potential responses to the threat of climate change in southern Africa and Africa as a whole.

### **Follow-up to the 2005 Conference – The LTMS**

During the 2005 National Climate Change Conference – 2005, it was agreed that a participatory climate change policy development process was to be initiated following the conclusion of, among others, a detailed scenario building process to map out how South Africa can meet its United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Article 2 commitment to greenhouse gas stabilisation whilst ensuring its focus on poverty alleviation and job creation.

In line with these agreements, Cabinet mandated a national process of building scenarios of possible futures, informed by the best available research and information - the Long-term Mitigation Scenario (LTMS) process that was launched in mid-2006. It was thought that the LTMS would help South Africa to define not only its position on future commitments under international treaties, but also shape its climate policy for the longer-term future.

The focus of the LTMS process, as the name suggests, is mitigation, that is reducing emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

The Department of Environment and Tourism as the focal point for climate change in South Africa convened and managed the process, which was overseen by the Inter-Ministerial Committee. The Energy Research Centre at the University of Cape Town (ERC) was appointed to project manage the entire process. The ERC undertook the task of convening and contracting the process specialists

and ensuring their independence. Similarly it set up the personnel of each of four Research Support Units.

One of the key objectives of the LTMS process was to ensure that South African stakeholders understand and are focused on a range of ambitious but realistic scenarios of future climate action both for themselves and for the country, based on best available information, notably long-term emissions scenarios and their cost implications.

The technical work of the LTMS was signed-off by the multi-stakeholder Scenario Building Team in October 2007.

### **The Stern Review and the IPCC's 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment**

At the same time that the LTMS technical work was being concluded, a number of important international events were taking also place.

One of these was the so-called Stern Review. This report to the British Prime Minister and Chancellor in October 2006 compiled by Sir Nicholas Stern set out to provide an assessment of, among others the economics of moving to a low-carbon global economy, focusing on the medium to long-term perspective, and drawing implications for the timescales for action, and the choice of policies and institutions and the potential of different approaches for adaptation to changes in the climate.

The review concluded that: (i) There is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if strong action is taken now; (ii) Climate change could have very serious impacts on growth and development; (iii) The costs of stabilising the climate are significant but manageable - delay would be dangerous and much more costly; (iv) Action on climate change is required across all countries, and it need not cap the aspirations for growth of rich or poor countries; (v) A range of options exists to cut emissions - strong, deliberate policy action is required to motivate their take-up; and (vi) Climate change demands an international response, based on a shared understanding of long-term goals and agreement on frameworks for action.

At the invitation of government, Sir Nicholas Stern presented his findings to the South African Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2006.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) signed-off on

its 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Synthesis Report (AR4) on Climate Change in Spain. The IPCC is the pre-eminent source of climate change science – their work being recognised in 2007 through the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The AR4 is clear - Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level.

### **Climate Change Summit 2009**

Following the July 2008 Cabinet Lekgotla, a policy development programme for the development of the National Climate Change Response Policy was announced along with government's directions for the National Climate Change Response Policy.

With this background and in order to implement Cabinet's decisions and directions, the departments of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and Science and Technology are hosting the Climate Change Summit 2009 from 3 to 6 March 2009 at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand, Gauteng.

The purpose of the Climate Change Summit 2009 is to: (i) Provide all key climate change response stakeholders with an update on the most recent climate change research and other current South African initiatives and interventions; and (ii) Provide a platform for all key climate change response stakeholders to discuss and agree the framework for a National Climate Change Response Policy that includes, among others, fiscal, regulatory and legislative packages as well as sectoral implementation plans.

By the end of the summit it is hoped that: (i) All key climate change response stakeholders have a common understanding of the most recent climate change research and other South African climate change response initiatives and interventions; (ii) A detailed policy framework (comprehensive annotated table of contents) is broadly supported; (iii) The roles and responsibilities of sector departments in respect to the development of the sector policy components is agreed; (iv) All policy development timelines and milestones are agreed; and (v) The implications and intentions of all policy directions are understood.