



agriculture,  
forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**WFC2015**  
XIV World Forestry Congress



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

## MEDIA STATEMENT

1 June 2015

### SOUTH AFRICA READY TO HOST XIV WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

Pretoria—The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr Senzeni Zokwana, announced at a media briefing held today, that South Africa is geared and ready to host the XIV World Forestry Congress. The congress will be held from 7 to 11 September 2015 at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Durban International Convention Centre, under the theme: **“Forest and People: Investing in a Sustainable Future”**.

Speaking at the media launch, Minister Zokwana said: “The growing threat of climate change has dramatically thrown the importance of our forests into critical relief.” Minister Zokwana added that forests sustain more than our economies because they serve as the lungs of the earth by providing humanity with oxygen, while absorbing carbon dioxide and providing livelihoods to millions of people around the globe.

“When we speak of the future, we cannot escape the need to pay attention to the issue of engaging our youth and women by empowering them to play a meaningful role in the future development of the forestry sector, as they are the future,” said Minister Zokwana.

Minister Zokwana was accompanied by Deputy Minister, General Bheki Cele, who also highlighted the need to promote the participation of women and young people in the congress and bridging the age gap in the sector.

Today marks 97 days in the count down to the congress, which is expected to draw over 5 000 delegates from across the continent, including government, business, academics, students, civil society and the media.

The World Forestry Congress is the largest and most significant gathering of the world's forestry sector and has been held every six years since 1926. It will be the first of its kind to be held on African soil.

The Secretary General of the XIV World Forestry Congress, Mr. Trevor Abrahams, underscored the importance of the congress in deliberating some of the key challenges facing forestry in Africa, including the competing demands for water, the threats of disease and fire to forests, the depletion of Africa's forests due to firewood harvesting and the related threat of encroaching desertification. Mr Abrahams also assured the assembled diplomatic corps that "the Durban ICC is a world class conference venue and that South Africa has gained extensive experience in hosting large international conferences and our security management system would ensure we have a safe and secure conference in Durban."

Also speaking at the launch, Ms Tiina Vahanen, the Associate Secretary-General of the congress said, "Investing in forests, as an investment in people, is the cross-cutting focus of the Congress and sessions will focus on the role of forests in sustaining life, acting as buffers against environmental change and inspiring new technologies and products, as well as to integrate forests and other land uses and to improve forest monitoring and governance".

"Our hope is that the congress in Durban will be the most dynamic and inclusive yet, and we are working to ensure that the voices of young people, women and local communities will be heard in the vital task of defining a vision for the sustainable future of forests and forestry," she concluded.

The XIV World Forestry Congress is a joint venture with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the African Union Commission and other relevant forestry stakeholders and government departments.

Registration for the congress is now open, visit [www.wfc2015.org.za](http://www.wfc2015.org.za). Registration closes on Thursday, 20 August 2015. There will be no registration fee for accredited media.

**Join the engagement by using the hashtag #Forests2015.**

**For further information please contact:**

Ms Makenosi Maroo

Chief Director: Stakeholder Relations and Communications

Tel.: 012 319 6787

Cell: 072 475 2956

E-mail: [MakenosiM@daff.gov.za](mailto:MakenosiM@daff.gov.za)