

# Land degradation can't be ignored says Molewa

Desertification, land degradation and drought has negatively affected livelihoods in a way that cannot be ignored anymore, Water and Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa said.



Edna Molewa (Image: GCIS)

"It is better to deal with the root causes of land and ecosystem degradation rather than the symptoms. We need to draw parallels between the effects of climate change and the resultant land degradation and drought," she said.

Molewa was addressing a segment of the 11th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 11) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Windhoek, Namibia.

"If you can put in place appropriate policies and practices that lead to the prevention of degradation, this will be the most efficient option, [rather] than attempting rehabilitation," she said.

The object of the convention was to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through effective action and partnership agreements.

"Desertification was predictable, avoidable and often reversible through the restoration of degraded lands," said Molewa.

"While biodiversity and healthy ecosystems provide wide-ranging benefits to society on the whole, many communities globally, and especially in Africa, depend directly on the local ecosystems to produce the majority of their food, energy, water and medicines.

"The degradation of ecosystems affects the communities' ability to deliver services, which in turn has a direct negative impact on human well-being as well as socio-economic conditions, especially for the poor," she said.

She said that only 13.5% of South Africa's land surface area is arable, or suitable for food production and every year

about 34,000 hectares of farmland was converted for other purposes.

Source: Sapa via I-Net Bridge

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