

# SA ready to host World Forestry Congress

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Pretoria - South Africa is set to host a world class congress in the forestry sector in September which will look into improving the future of the sector in the world and South Africa.



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Speaking at the XIV World Forestry Congress 2015 media launch on Monday, agriculture, forestry and fisheries minister, Senzeni Zokwana, said South Africa is ready to host the event and technical preparations are underway.

The WFC 2015 will be held at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Durban from 7 to 11 September.

The minister said South Africa is also honoured to be recognised by the world to hold the WFC 2015, and regarded it as being hosted by Africa due to the collaboration of the country with the African Union Commission.

## Life comes from forestry

He emphasised the need to make people understand the importance of forestry in their lives.

"Forestry and people are interlinked. We need to make sure that we put more investment to create a more viable future for forestry," said the minister.

He said the future of forestry can only be improved if youth participation in the sector is encouraged.

It is envisaged that the congress will address forestry issues holistically including energy, food security, climate change and water amongst the challenges facing the sector globally.

The congress, which will be conducted in an interactive manner to allow inputs from participants, will also focus on how

South Africa can deal with issues of land claims better.

Deputy minister for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, General Bheki Cele, reiterated that forestry is a complete provision of life and people are not really aware of it.

"Food comes from forestry. Energy comes from forestry. Accommodation and life comes from forestry. Forestry balances the world when it comes to global warming among other things," he said.

## **Getting the youth involved**

The deputy minister also reiterated that looking at the future of the forestry sector, youth need to be involved in the conference and beyond.

"The conference will have to find a niche for a bigger input and invitation to the youth. I don't think youth are big role players in the forestry sector at the moment. If we don't push that agenda with them, we might work it alone," said Cele.

He encouraged the youth to consider being more involved in the business side of the sector and find their role, especially in education and employment.

He also said that youth and communities need to be trained on how to manage field fires and prevent them from recurring.

The deputy minister said South Africa is 120 million hectares broad, and 40 million hectares of the country is covered by forestry which shows opportunities in the sector need to be exploited.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations representative, Dr Tobias Takavasarasha, said the organisation is providing the necessary support and is working overtime to ensure that the world-class event becomes a success.

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