

SA elected to Bureau of Convention on Biological Diversity

South Africa has for the first time been elected to the Bureau of the Conference of Parties (CoP) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).



This has been confirmed by the president of the 12th meeting of the CoP to the CBD, Yoon Seong-kyu. The CBD 12th CoP meeting is being held in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, from 6-17 October 2014.

At each ordinary meeting of the CoP, which is convened every two years, ten vice presidents are elected from the representatives of parties of the five United Nations regions to serve as the bureau. Two members are elected per region to ensure appropriate geographical representation.

The term of office commences upon the closure of the meeting at which the bureau members are elected and end at the closure of the next meeting in two years' time.

Strategic guidance

South Africa was elected alongside the Democratic Republic of Congo to represent the Africa region. The bureau provides overall strategic guidance to the CoP Secretariat with regard to the effective functioning of its meetings. The CoP is the main decision-making body of the convention. It reviews implementation of the convention, establishes relevant subsidiary bodies, adopts work programmes for the achievement of its objectives, provides policy guidance and strengthens synergies with other relevant conventions.

The convention provides a global legal framework for action on biodiversity. Its objectives are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing arising from utilisation of genetic resources including by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies.

The CBD is one of the three Rio Conventions alongside the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Effects of Drought (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Known as the Rio Conventions, the three agreements were adopted in Rio De Janeiro during the 1992 Earth Summit. They are intricately linked as they address interdependent issues in pursuit of sustainable development goals.

Leadership in Africa

The election of South Africa to the bureau comes with a huge responsibility relating to the need to provide leadership in the African region as far as the Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as well as implementation of the convention's two protocols - the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing.

"South Africa's election to the bureau strengthens the country's status as a global player in the biodiversity field as demonstrated by our present responsibility as chairperson of the group of Like-minded Megadiverse Countries (LMMC) which represent more than two-thirds of the world's biological diversity," said the leader of the South African delegation to CBD CoP12, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, Barbara Thomson.

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