

Minister Molewa promotes blue economy

PRETORIA: Water and Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa says countries worldwide should embrace the concept of the blue economy as a means of reaching higher growth levels through marine resources.



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"Our oceans and coasts must be seen for the potential they have to grow the prosperity of our nations and well-being of our people," Minister Molewa said.

She was addressing the ministerial segment of the Abidjan Convention, which is taking place in Cape Town. It brings together member states of the Abidjan Convention, which covers the marine environment, coastal zones and related inland waters falling within the jurisdiction of the states of the West and Central African region - from Mauritania to Namibia inclusive, which have become contracting parties to the convention.

The 11th biennial Conference of Parties (COP11) to the Abidjan Convention is being held under the theme 'Promoting Blue Growth in Africa: Towards Sustainable Management of Marine Resources'.

Minister Molewa said parties to the convention must examine how they can take on the idea of the blue economy, and make it work best in their countries.

She also referred to the AU Summit's enthusiasm and support for the exploration of the continent's blue economy.

During the AU Summit in Addis Ababa in January 2014, the Heads of State formally acknowledged that Africa's oceans are essential to the sustainable development of the continent, and that they should play a critical role in shaping Africa's Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

"This should be seen in the context of Africa's own long-term sustainable development aspirations, as encapsulated in Agenda 2063," Minister Molewa told delegates.

As a result of the growing global interest in the concept of the blue economy and oceans as a resource for unlocking such potential, Minister Molewa announced that the South African government is in the process of developing a strategy for the Blue Economy.

She said the strategy will enable government to sustainably harness the abundant resources of the ocean and coastal domain.

"As part of this process, government, through the Department of Environmental Affairs, other relevant government departments and public entities, has carried out an analysis of the economic opportunities for South Africa and the region.

"A number of key areas such as aquaculture, marine transport, offshore oil and gas exploration would be crucial in growing South Africa's economy, providing well needed jobs and improving prosperity whilst also ensuring environmental sustainability," Minister Molewa said.

She said pioneering work was being undertaken to develop environmental standards for off-shore exploration and exploitation activities of mining and mineral resources in the region.

She added that Africa as a continent faced myriad challenges, such as poverty, under-development and environmental degradation.

Decisions expected at the ministerial segment include the revitalisation of the West and Central Africa Region (WACAF) Action Plan, as well as the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

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