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Media urged to play its part in helping SA contribute global Early Warnings for All target

South African Weather Service (SAWS) Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ishaam Abader, has asked for the media's hand in helping the country to make a meaningful contribution towards global efforts aimed at protecting the world population from hazardous weather, water or climate events by 2027.

Mr Abader was addressing journalists and corporate communication professionals during a National Press Club networking session at the SAWS' new head office building downtown Centurion, Pretoria on the evening of Thursday, January 25, 2024.

In a brief address, he said South Africa remained susceptible to the negative impacts of climate change and hazardous weather including severe floods, droughts, tropical cyclones, storms, and heat waves. This, he explained, posed a threat to life, livelihoods, property and infrastructure.

He stressed the need for the South African society to be WeatherSMART, explaining that this denoted being Safe, More informed, Alert, Resilient, and having Timely access to relevant information and services.

"I cannot stress enough the importance of the media's assistance in realising this ideal," he said. "The SAWS and the media ought to join hands in helping the country play its part in contributing towards the United Nations' ambitious Early Warnings for All initiative."

Turning to the role of the SAWS, Mr Abader noted that the contribution of the organisation towards the national quality of life tended to be downplayed, largely out of ignorance.

Whereas the SAWS' portfolio covered forecasts of various deep sea and coastal ocean phenomena, the provision of meteorological information to the aviation industry, research focused on reducing the impact of weather-related natural disasters, the provision of specialised ambient air quality forecasts and the Global Atmospheric Watch, he explained, the organisation

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Company Secretary: Mr Mr Nkululeko Ndebele

tended to be pigeonholed as merely the provider of daily minimum and maximum weather temperatures.

“We carry a far more enormous task on our shoulders that most people realise. Our work plays a key role in informing public and private decision-making where matters of health, food security, aviation, marine transport, water resources, Disaster Risk Reduction, and climate change adaptation are concerned,” he said.

A public entity of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE), the SAWS is tasked with, amongst other things, providing timely and accurate scientific data in the field of meteorology to the broader South African society. The organisation plays a vital role in South African public life, not just as a provider of key services, but also in empowering citizens to adapt to the effects of the ever changing weather and climate.

The organisation boasts a fleet of observational tools including 12 meteorological radars systems, more than 243 automatic weather stations, 1050 rainfall stations, 153 automatic rainfall stations, 11 upper-air soundings stations, 24 lightening detection sensors and 12 solar radiation stations. It has 23 offices across the country.

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