

30 July 2021

The South African Weather Service (SAWS) Celebrates 20 Years as a Public Entity!

The South African Weather Service (SAWS) as an entity is 20 years old! It became a public entity by law on 15 July 2001. With more than 160 years of meteorological services in South Africa, SAWS continues to supply meteorological and climatological information to South Africans and beyond – contributing to saving lives and livelihoods.

Since the establishment of the entity 20 years ago, there have been many notable achievements that are listed below:

- 2001: *The **South African Weather Service (SAWS) is established on 15 July as a Schedule 3A public entity under the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.***
- 2002: *SAWS participates in the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This coincides with celebrating **25 years of atmospheric trace gas monitoring** at the Cape Point Global Atmosphere Watch (GAW) laboratory.*
- 2003: ***South Africa** is selected as a **test site** for the dissemination of data from **Meteosat 8**. A satellite dish for the reception of the new Meteosat Second Generation (MSG) Geostationary Satellite was donated by EUMETSAT and has, since December 2003, provided considerably more detailed imagery and more frequent updates.*
- 2004: *SAWS is selected as the **Southern African Training Centre** for the Meteosat Second Generation (MSG).*
- 2005: *A **lightning detection network**, one of only three in the southern hemisphere, is installed.*

**Certified for
Excellence**

Board Members: Ms Nana Magomola (Chairperson), Dr Phillip Dexter (Deputy Chairperson), Adv Derick Block, Mr David Lefutso, Dr Mphekgo Maila, Ms Kelebogile Moroka-Mosia, Ms Sally Mudly-Padayachie, Dr Thuli Khumalo (DFFE Rep), Mr Itani Phaduli, Ms Feziwe Renqe. Mr Ishaam Abader (CEO).
Company Secretary: Ms Thandi Zide

- 2006: SAWS receives the **United Arab Emirate Prize for Weather Modification**.
- 2007: The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and SAWS forms a partnership to develop and maintain a national **South African Air Quality Information System (SAAQIS)** to store and archive air quality data collected by various monitoring entities in the country. SAWS was chosen for this role due to its expertise in data management.
- 2008: The Meteorological Association for Southern Africa is established under the chairmanship of South Africa; The **Severe Weather Forecasting Demonstration Project** in five southern African countries is launched.
- 2009: South Africa, one of three countries in the southern hemisphere, achieves **status as Global Producing Centre** for long-range forecasts from the WMO's Commission for Basic Systems.
- The **SAWS Meteorological Training Centre receives professional accreditation** with the Transport Education and Training Authority to offer the National Certificate in Weather Observation (NQF level 5).
- 2010: New **Doppler radar systems** are introduced to the South African weather radar network.
- SAWS celebrates 150 years of meteorology in South Africa.**
- 2011: SAWS participates in the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP-17** and confirms its expertise as a reliable source of weather and climate information, with research and technical abilities supporting and enhancing South Africa's mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- 2012: The **legal mandate of SAWS is extended** to include the hosting of the South African Air Quality Information System (SAAQIS).
- 2013: **The South African Weather Service Act, 2001 (Act No. 8 of 2001), is amended** in November 2013, extending the organisation's mandate to include responsibilities in terms of air quality monitoring.
- 2014: A National Framework for Climate Services (NFCS) is created, which is aligned to the National Climate Change Response Policy of Government.
- 2015: A **mobile application (App) called the WeatherSmart App** is developed for Android handsets in collaboration with mobile technology provider. This App is still running and has undergone several improvements and runs on all smart phones.
- 2016: Amid severe drought, SAWS develops **products for the agriculture, energy, water and health sectors** and the **National Education Plan** which articulates relevant resource needs in its field and contributes to addressing unemployment challenges.
- 2017: In recognition of its initiatives and to give the organisation access to direct funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF), SAWS is **declared a National Science Council**.
- 2018: The **Marine Unit** of SAWS, established in 2018, is the first in South Africa to develop and operationalise high-resolution (~6 km) and very high-resolution (~2 km) wave, water level and storm surge models for the entire coastline of South Africa.

- 2019: *As part of its regional responsibilities, SAWS contributes to the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**, thereby enhancing its international cooperation and fulfilling its responsibilities as a Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre in terms of the Severe Weather Forecasting Programme (SWFDP) and the Southern African Regional Flash Flood Guidance System (SARFFGS).*
- 2020: *SAWS initiates a change from its deterministic forecasting model to a methodology of impact-based forecasting. This new approach, which brings about a shift from “**what will the weather be**” to “**what will the weather do**” is launched in 2020 and is recognised for its ability to unpack the impact of weather and climate threats on sensitive economic sectors.*

As we celebrate 20 years as a government entity, **we are proud to announce the appointment of SAWS CEO, Mr Ishaam Abader, as South Africa’s new Permanent Representative (PR) with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** as approved by the Department of Forestry Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO).

Mr Abader was the acting Director-General for the DFFE from April 2020 until his appointment as SAWS CEO in April 2021. He is an attorney with more than 23 years’ experience in government. He has a Master’s degree in Business Administration (MBA) and has a varied background that spans the gamut of the corporate world, including sitting on at least four different Boards and he is registered with the Institute of Directors. He has good experience in the international arena and sat on a Board at Interpol.

Mr Abader has joined SAWS and the WMO at a time when the world has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and needs to ensure the continued sustainability of the entity, its ability to deliver weather, climate and air quality services, maintain its observational infrastructure and train new meteorologists and meteorological technicians for the future.

Another feather in SAWS’ cap is the recent appointment of SAWS Executive, Mr Mnikeli Ndabambi as Chairperson of WMO’s Regional Association I (Africa). This further demonstrates South Africa’s leading role in WMO and on the African continent. Mr Ndabambi has more than 35 years’ experience at SAWS and is currently the Executive: Information and Information Systems.

SAWS looks forward to serving for many years to come and reminds the public to be weather aware and vigilant during times of severe weather, be it flooding, hail, severe thunderstorms, severe cold, wind or severe heat and drought.

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