

The Internationale

The International Relations Newsletter of the South African Weather Service

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Designation of SAWS Chief Executive Officer as Permanent Representative of SA with WMO

From a positioning perspective, in July 2021, the South African Weather Service successfully facilitated the designation of SAWS Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as the Permanent Representative (PR) of South Africa with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) by the Government of the Republic of South Africa. This was aimed at ensuring that the country is internationally represented in the meteorological echelons and that its service delivery is enhanced through the international meteorological programmes coordinated by international organisations such as the WMO. **Continues on page 3.**

Foreword

by the Permanent Representative of South Africa with WMO



The weather knows no boundaries because weather phenomena move from one country to the other. It therefore becomes imperative that there should be a strong cooperation amongst the countries. The establishment of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), as an Agency of the United Nations, was for the promotion of international cooperation on atmospheric science, climatology, hydrology and geophysics, as well as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) that promotes the international air navigation and enhances the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safety of aircraft and passengers. In this regard, it becomes significant that every National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) of the WMO and ICAO Member States should establish International Relations (IR) desks for the prime purpose of facilitating and coordinating the country's international activities.

In respect to the South African Weather Service (SAWS) the IR desk, first and foremost, has a responsibility to provide guidance and advisory support to the designated Permanent Representative (PR) of the country with the WMO.

Additionally, the desk coordinates and facilitates all the meteorological activities of the country, in support of the PR, who is the focal point of the country on meteorology. A secondary role of the IR desk is to provide coordination support to the SAWS core departments and other government departments on issues of meteorology. The key performance areas of the IR desk include ensuring the country representation at international platforms; international positioning within the meteorological echelons; co-ordination of the international cooperation; and hosting of the PR related international meetings. Finally, the IR desk is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the designated regional institutions of WMO and ICAO hosted internally, such as the Regional Training Centre (RTC) and Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre (RSMC).

As PR of South Africa with WMO, I am proud of the achievements of the past year and believe that our role will strengthen during 2022.

Ishaam Abader, PR of South Africa with WMO and SAWS CEO.

March 2022



Designation of SAWS Chief Executive Officer as Permanent Representative of SA (continued from page 1)

Another aspect of the country's positioning was the confirmation of South Africa as the Chairperson of the RA I Services Committee. This leadership position translates to the implementation of the WMO Reforms on the continent, to ensure that the WMO Services Programmes that are aimed at enhancing meteorology in Africa are properly coordinated.

Strategic highlights

Strategic highlights of note included the country's representation both at technical and political levels in the virtual SADC Cluster Meeting for Ministers responsible for ICT, Information, Transport and Meteorology convened from 6 to 9 July 2021. The country's delegation was led by the DFFE Deputy Minister, Ms Makhotsi Sotyu, whilst the SAWS technical delegation was led by the SAWS CEO. The SAWS Board also attended the Ministerial segment of this meeting.





18th session of the Regional Association I (RA I) session

South Africa participated in Phase II (technical session) of the 18th session of the RA I Session held from 23 to 26 August 2021. The meeting deliberated and provided insight on how the existing weather, water and climate information strategies and programmes could be enhanced. It was in this particular meeting that South Africa expressed its views and concerns around the WMO Unified Data policy which would be adopted during the WMO Extra-ordinary Congress of October 2021 and how it would negatively impact the sustainability of NMHS' in the developing countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island and Developing States (SIDS), that have a commercial mandate to be derived from their generated data.

RA I Consultative Session

The country also participated in the RA I Consultative Session on 2 September 2021, which was a follow-up meeting to the Phase II session of the 18th RA I session. This session aimed at providing a platform to have robust and in-depth discussions on the technical matters that would be adopted during the extra-ordinary Congress of October 2021, for implementation by Members. This session presented an opportunity to interrogate further the WMO Unified Data policy and its implications for the developing countries and LDCs. These intense deliberations were useful for the country and provided insights to SAWS on the approach to use in the development of the country's response to the WMO unified data policy.

WMO-SAWS bilateral session



The virtual WMO-SAWS bilateral session of 21 September 2021 was a courtesy follow-up meeting between the WMO Secretary-General (SG) and the PR of South Africa with WMO. The meeting deliberated intensely on the country's position with regards to the WMO Unified Data policy. Additionally, discussions were held on the country's request for the WMO to consider including more WMO Members from the developing world on the newly established WMO Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF), to assist them in the implementation of the WMO Global Basic Observing Network (GBON). Finally, the country, raised its challenges and limitations on the proper implementation of the WMO Hydrological programmes in the SADC region.

SAWS expert nominated to serve for a continental chairpersonship position

A SAWS expert, Ms Lee-ann Simpson was nominated to serve for a continental chairpersonship position for the WMO Global Multi-hazard Alert System (GMAS). GMAS is a WMO framework for substantially increasing and enhancing the availability of authoritative warnings and information related to extreme and/or potentially high-impact weather, water and climate events at regional and global levels. This position was accorded to the country because of its responsibility as the Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre (RSMC) in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); and the excellent and successful pioneering of the Severe Weather Forecasting Demonstration Project (SWFDP) that made history at the WMO.



Since this appointment, Ms Simpson has resigned from SAWS and relocated internationally. A replacement for this position is currently being sought.



Permanent Representative of South Africa with WMO, Mr Ishaam Abader



Ensuring the efficiency of the PR of SA with the WMO

In order to ensure the efficiency of the PR of South Africa with WMO in coordinating the meteorological activities of the country at national level, an introductory meeting with the country focal points serving within the WMO echelons, was convened on 19 October 2021. This session attracted various experts from Government departments and academic institutions.

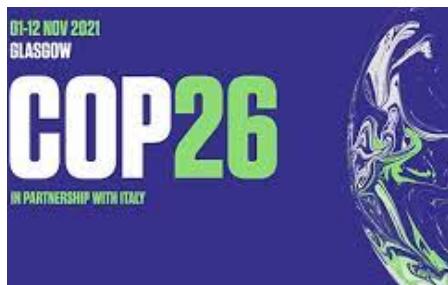
The experts made presentations on WMO activities they are responsible for; and intense deliberations were made on how to improve their roles. Participants to the session agreed that quarterly sessions of this forum should be convened to enhance monitoring and reporting.

WMO Common Alert Programme

Because of South Africa's extensive expertise, the country was requested by the WMO to assist with the implementation of the WMO Common Alert Programme (CAP). In this regard five countries, namely Angola, Eswatini, Liberia, Namibia and Nigeria have been attached to South Africa in order for South Africa to provide assistance to them in relation to the CAP. A WMO-SAWS session to provide details on how the country should undertake the newly acquired WMO CAP responsibility was convened on 20 October 2021. Subsequently, the SAWS-WMO agreement governing the CAP implementation was signed at the end of November 2021.

Extra-ordinary session of the World Meteorological Congress

The country, as a WMO Member, participated in the extra-ordinary session of the World Meteorological Congress, which was held from 11 to 22 October 2021. This was preceded by the process of acquiring Congress delegation credentials from the Government as well as the convening of a preparatory expert session to discuss the technical inputs for the Congress. The Congress predominantly engaged on the implementation of hydrological activities by Members; adopted the WMO SOFF concept for GBON implementation and approved the WMO Unified Data policy that governs the sharing of meteorological data for centralised availability.



26th Climate Change Conference

South Africa participated in the 26th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting held from 31 October to 12 November 2021 in Glasgow, United Kingdom. The country was officially represented by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, in its capacity as the custodian of the country's climate change processes. The SAWS attended the session virtually and the key side session of the COP-26 for the meteorological community, was the launch of the WMO Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF) on 3 November 2021.

Hosting of RA I Service Committee

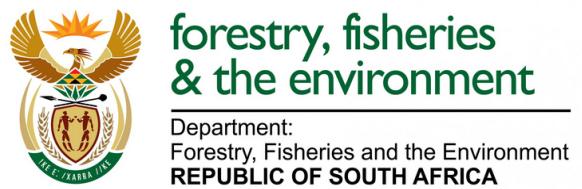
During November 2021, the organisational efforts were channelled towards the hosting of RA 1 Service Committee kick-off meeting by the country from 16 to 19 November 2021. South Africa holds the Chairpersonship of the RA I Services Committee, hence the country's hosting of the meeting. The kick-off meeting was preceded by the SAWS-WMO Preparatory session on 8 October 2021, which sought to refine the objectives of the kick-off meeting and its coordination responsibilities. The country, through the SAWS, successfully coordinated the session and the roadmap for the development of the work-plan for this committee was successfully attained.



First Coordination and Feedback Meeting of the Regional WIGOS Centre



To ensure the country's relevance for its aspired endorsement as the Regional WIGOS Centre in 2023, the organisation hosted the First Coordination and Feedback Meeting of the Regional WIGOS Centre–Southern Africa, on 8 December 2021. This was a feedback session for the SADC Directors of the NMHS' and their respective focal points, on the gaps in the implementation of WIGOS in the SADC region. In the event of identified challenges, the WMO representatives provided guidance and a way forward to ensure that the challenges were addressed.



Maintaining close collaboration with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE)

At national level, the organisation has maintained its close collaboration with its shareholder, the DFFE. This cooperation has resulted in the organisation being used by the DFFE for the provision of meteorological inputs for the DFFE's meetings and events. In this regard, the organisation provided its technical inputs and participated in the technical segment of the 4th Ordinary Session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water, and Environment (STC, ARDWE), held from 13 to 15 December 2021. The SAWS' inputs were provided on the following agenda items: Integrated African Strategy on Meteorology; Implementation of the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology; Institutional and Operational framework for the Multi-hazard Early Warning System (MEWS) and the African Strategy on Climate Change. The SAWS' inputs were duly endorsed by the Ministry and SAWS formed part of the delegation that briefed the Minister in preparation for this session.

The new Meteorological Association of Southern Africa (MASA) leadership



The 14th Meteorological Association of Southern Africa (MASA) Annual General Meeting was convened on 17 March 2022, in which South Africa was duly led and represented by the Permanent Representative (PR) of the county with WMO, Mr Ishaam Abader. The primary objective of the meeting was to elect the new MASA leadership since the 2-year term of the incumbents has lapsed. The outcomes of these elections saw Mozambique elected as the new Chairperson of the Association, with Lesotho re-elected as Deputy Chairperson.

With regard to the Management Board of the Association, the MASA Constitution prescribes for five Member States to serve on the structure, comprising the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson as well as three additional Members. In this regard, South Africa and Tanzania were re-elected as members, with Zambia elected as a new member.

The meeting also sought to consider and endorse the MASA Rescue Plan Programme of Action, which is aimed at enhancing the operations of the Association and re-strengthen its fundamental contribution to meteorological development in the SADC region. This was duly endorsed by the meeting and its implementation will be the focus of the Association for the year ahead.

Also reflected on during the meeting were the WMO activities and priorities in the SADC region as well as the efforts to implement the WMO reforms thereof. The SADC Secretariat also made presentations on the meteorological programmes they are currently embarking on.

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South African Weather Service



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