



COO Limpho Makotoko of Environmental Affairs, Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, Deputy Minister Barbara Thomson is joined by Director-General Nosipho Ngcaba and Biodiversity & Conservation Deputy-Director General Mr Shonisani Munzhedzi.

# Biodiversity, transformation and job creation

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) will launch a Biodiversity Economy Investment Catalogue, profiling investment ready biodiversity projects. The goal is to increase the supply of indigenous plant species by supplying farmers no less than 500 hectares of land to be cultivated with high value species. Two million hectares of land has also been identified as suitable for biodiversity economy activities. In making the announcement

earlier this week, Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa noted that this was the same size as the Kruger National Park to make the point that her department is very ambitious and wants results. With results in mind, the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy has also been updated to include specific, measurable and achievable targets. The minister said South Africa's approach to managing its rich natural heritage is multi-faceted, focusing on an inclusive, value-chain approach

to developing the biodiversity economy. She added that our communities are the primary custodians of the country's biodiversity. Minister Molewa highlighted the waste sector and the waste economy as one of the most important emerging contributors to generating jobs in the green economy, saying that waste economy has the potential to address inequality, poverty alleviation and create jobs. She also flagged the plight of waste pickers and said we have

a moral responsibility to ensure that these workers are valued and treated with dignity; a project is being developed which will, for example, provide waste pickers with uniforms, One of the steps, she believes, will ensure respect of their role in providing a much needed basic service to the country. The minister said one of the vehicles used to boost employment in the biodiversity economy is the Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) and that the programme

did more than just provide employment: "This is actually a space where we train people who might not otherwise have opportunities to be trained." She added that sustainable development is imperative to protecting the environment. There are three pillars: the environment must be safeguarded for future generations to come, jobs must be created for the people and we must ensure that the economy grows so that all benefit from a

social perspective. Transformation is key. We have to utilise our natural resources for transformation to happen - for example we have medicinal plants in South Africa which are being harvested in one area (usually rural) and primary production and value adding happens elsewhere, but some of the communities have indigenous knowledge of what can be done with these products, they have to be included in the value chain as part of transformation. So we can

see transformation is part of 'environment': it must be about job creation, economic development, social imperatives of how we grow skills and capacities." She believes it is the moral responsibility of government to ensure that every cent of their budgets goes to the people. "The little that we have as government must go to the people and we must ensure that poverty is alleviated." Her department believes there must be a balance of "planet, people and profit".