

# Molewa fought for cleaner, greener world for all

Minister believed that through the development of waste economy, inequality, poverty can be defeated



**W**aste is money. This was one of the many mantras of the late environmental affairs minister Dr Edna Molewa – a leader who was committed to ensuring that jobs were created through recycling, alongside creating a cleaner and greener world for all.

As South Africa prepares to celebrate National Marine Week, which is celebrated annually during the second week of October, one is reminded of Molewa's efforts, and commitment, to ensuring our oceans and the land-based sources of litter that ends up in the oceans, is eradicated.

Such was her desire to ensure that all South Africans knew of the wonders of the oceans, that she ensured the department hosted its National Marine Week celebrations in Limpopo two years ago.

Marine pollution is one of the biggest challenges we face today and threatens fragile ecosystems. Because of this, the oceans and our marine environment have been the focus of a number of campaigns.

Earlier this month, SA joined many coastal countries in commemorating the International Coastal Clean-up Day. The day rallied together communities with the common goal of collecting and documenting marine litter around global coastlines.

According to the World Bank, SA produces 54 425 tonnes of municipal solid

waste daily, and this is the 15th highest rate in the world.

South Africa has shown commitment to addressing the marine litter and micro-plastics challenge through several forums, with Molewa announcing earlier this year that consultations were being held with the cosmetics industry to phase out micro-plastics.

In July 2017, the G20 group of countries, of which South Africa is a member, adopted an Action Plan on Marine Litter. In December 2017, at the margins of the 3rd UN Environment Assembly, South Africa endorsed the UN's Clean Seas Campaign, which exists as a platform for governments to engage the general public, civil society and the private sector to find solutions to the plastic litter challenge.

SA is also participating in the Western Indian Ocean Strategic Action Programme (WIO-SAP) on land-based sources of marine pollution, under the Nairobi

Convention, for the protection, management and development of the marine and coastal and environment of the Western Indian Ocean region.

Also, the department of environmental affairs has a number of programmes addressing the challenge involving multiple government departments and is leading consultations with industry stakeholders.

The department has implemented its Working for the Coast programme as an Expanded Public Works project aimed at creating jobs through the clearing of litter from beaches nationally.

Molewa believed that through the development of the waste or circular economy, inequality, poverty alleviation and job creation should be addressed.

She championed for the dignity of waste pickers as a moral responsibility that we have to address. Through Operation Phakisa: Oceans Economy, SA supports enhancement of the general

environment in which attractions and products are located; strengthens the linkages between attractions; and improves the quality of the tourist experience within destinations.

A campaign that lay close to Molewa's heart was the Source to Sea initiative. It is a programme that the department will launch and pilot in KwaZulu-Natal this year.

The initiative is an ambitious new strategy to investigate, combat and ultimately eradicate pollution, and plastic pollution in particular, which threatens both freshwater and marine ecosystems.

Molewa believed that as the department entrusted by the constitution to ensure all South Africans live in a clean and healthy environment, we need to work daily to ensure that the legacy we leave for our kids and grandchildren is one for which we will be proud.

■ Modise is communications head at the department of environmental affairs