

# MEDIA RELEASE



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Department of Water Affairs and Forestry - Chief Directorate: Communication  
Services

## SOUTH AFRICA TO CO-HOST INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT

In a tribute to government's approach to forest management South Africa, through the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has been invited to co-host an international meeting on financial instruments to promote the sustainable management of the world's forests. The meeting will be held in Oslo from 22 – 25 January and is co-hosted by Norway, South Africa, Brazil, Denmark, Malaysia and the UK.

This follows an announcement last week of a major foreign investment in South Africa's forest industry. South Africa is an active member of the United Nations Forum on Forests which initiated the meeting, and which recognises South Africa as a leading country in plantation forestry. A paper to be delivered at the workshop, argues that the success of plantation forestry in South Africa is due to both a strong regulatory regime as well as the positive action taken by the private sector.

South African companies Mondi, Sappi and Safcol, as well as a number of smaller growers, have achieved international, independent certification of their sustainable management practices. Almost 90% of South Africa's plantations are certified either by the Forestry Stewardship Council or the International Standards Organisation. This is the highest proportion achieved by any country.

South Africa's regulatory regime is seen as providing the necessary framework for sustainability. South Africa has, for

almost 30 years, controlled forest planting based on the projected impact on water resources. Now, in addition under the National Forests Act, the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is working with the private sector and other stakeholders to establish a national system of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management which will serve as a nationally agreed system to measure and promote sustainable management practices.

The privatisation of the State's forest resources will add impetus to sustainability by removing plantations from sensitive areas such as the St. Lucia Wetland, and by expanding certification.

"South Africa's selection as co-host of this important international meeting demonstrates the strength of our forest policies and our positive relationship with forestry companies" says Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Ronnie Kasrils. "There were some who predicted that our forest policy would stifle investment. Instead, we have seen an acceleration of private sector interest, both at home and abroad. Confidence in our forest sector can be demonstrated not only by progress in the privatisation of state resources, by also recent international investment in our private sector through the joint venture between Mondi and the Global Environmental Fund. We look forward to further positive developments" said Minister Kasrils.

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