



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### WSEP Baswa Le Meetse learners honoured as global biodiversity citizens

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Learners from the Department of Water and Sanitation's (DWS) Water and Sanitation Education Programme (WSEP) Baswa Le Meetse have earned international recognition as Global Biodiversity Citizens following a standout performance at the 2026 International Day for Biological Diversity celebrations held at the Birchwood Hotel and OR Tambo Conference Centre in Boksburg.

The event, hosted under the global theme "Acting Locally for Global Impact," brought together government leaders, international delegates, conservation agencies, researchers, environmental practitioners, community representatives and learners to celebrate biodiversity and strengthen global commitments to environmental sustainability.

As part of South Africa's official hosting of the United Nations International Day for Biological Diversity, the Department of Water and Sanitation participated through its WSEP Baswa Le Meetse programme, showcasing the important role of youth in environmental stewardship, water conservation and biodiversity protection.

One of the highlights of the celebration was a powerful dramatized performance by the WSEP learners, who used poetry, storytelling, movement and symbolism to raise awareness about biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and the urgent need to protect natural resources.

The learners delivered a compelling message on humanity's responsibility to safeguard ecosystems, rivers, forests and biodiversity for future generations. Their performance resonated strongly with delegates and became one of the most memorable moments of the event.

A particularly powerful message came when the learners declared:

"AI cannot replace nature."

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The statement captured the audience's attention, highlighting the reality that technological advancement can never replace the vital ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources that sustain life on Earth.

The learners also reminded delegates that humanity has only one planet and that protecting the environment requires immediate action and collective responsibility.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Narend Singh, emphasized that biodiversity is the foundation of human well-being.

“Our natural world is not an endless resource, but a life support system on which civilisation fundamentally relies,” he said.

Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts echoed the message, stressing that biodiversity conservation must become part of everyday life in communities, schools, businesses and households.

The celebration reached an emotional climax when the WSEP Baswa Le Meetse learners were formally awarded Global Citizen Badges and recognised as Global Biodiversity Citizens in recognition of their outstanding environmental advocacy and inspirational performance.

The recognition symbolises international acknowledgement of the learners' role as emerging environmental ambassadors and future leaders in biodiversity conservation.

Adding to the significance of the achievement, it was announced that the learners would have an opportunity to represent South Africa internationally as young ambassadors for biodiversity and environmental protection.

The recognition marks a proud milestone for the Department of Water and Sanitation and demonstrates the impact of environmental education programmes in empowering young people to become active citizens and champions of sustainable development.

Special recognition was also given to the learners' mentor, Ms Mapula, for her dedication and commitment in guiding and empowering the learners to become confident advocates for biodiversity conservation.

As the celebrations concluded, the WSEP Baswa Le Meetse learners left the stage not only as performers, but as symbols of hope, environmental leadership and the next generation of global biodiversity champions.

**Maria Lebese and Mmaletsholo Malatsi**

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