



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**THE LAUNCH OF THE OCEAN OBSERVATION AND MONITORING BUOY
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TSITSIKAMMA, EASTERN CAPE**

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Members of staff of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Principals and teachers of the various schools

Members of the community

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

I am particularly elated to be here today and celebrate a significant milestone in the Department of Environmental Affairs' endeavour to demonstrate the commitment of our government to the conservation and protection of our ocean and coastal environment.

The significance of this event today is amplified by the fact that we have reached a critical point in our history whereby this very environment we are attempting to conserve and protect, is under severe threat from climate and climate change processes.

The launch of this ocean observation and monitoring buoy comes at an appropriate time as the Department has just successfully hosted a Storm Surge Workshop in Knysna, involving numerous stakeholders. Knysna as a venue was important in that this stretch of coast, according to a World Bank study, is the

most vulnerable area in South Africa where the impacts of intense and frequent storm events will be most severe due to climate change.

I am proud to announce that the buoy that will be launched today was developed in-house by our own departmental scientists. This buoy, a first in a series of observation and monitoring platforms, will form the basis of the South African National Oceans and Coastal Monitoring System.

These observation and monitoring platforms will not only provide a long-term data series, but will also provide access to real-time data, which is significant in scenario and coastal spatial planning and crucial in predictive modelling of events within the ocean. The information that will be transmitted by this buoy as well as future technological developments will be valuable in our understanding and detection of events that would feed into an Early Warning System.

Our vision is to expand the current observation and monitoring system so that it can contribute to the readiness of our country and its citizens to the impacts of climate change and threats from the ocean. It has been documented that the poor and rural communities will be most vulnerable and this would have huge socio-economic implications.

There is also no doubt that the poor and most vulnerable of our society do not fully understand the complexity of climate change and its impacts. As a result, the Department has therefore undertaken to involve our coastal communities in the collection of important information in support of our scientific programme.

In the pilot phase the Department will be targeting schools in the immediate vicinity of the buoy by granting them on-line access to the data and information. Teachers will have specially designed lesson plans to practically demonstrate the functioning of the ocean and coastal environment and use this to foster an interest in subjects like mathematics and natural science.

The ultimate aim is to grow the next generation of environmental custodians in the very communities where the buoy systems are launched. This will create a sense of ownership and communities could partner with government in this initiative in order to protect and conserve the ocean and coastal environment for present and future generations even amidst the threats of climate change.

Let us work together so that our collective efforts can make a difference and that we would be better prepared for environmental threats that could impact on the livelihoods of our people. The launch of this buoy and other systems around the coast will take us a step closer in achieving this goal.

I thank you.