

THE GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAMME

**Phase 1 Synthesis Meeting
Kirstenbosch, Cape Town
11:30, 22 September 2000**

Closing Address

**MINISTER RONNIE KASRILS, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY**

Professor Hal Mooney, Dr Jeff Waage, members of the Global Invasive Species Programme, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the privilege of giving this closing address for the GISP Phase 1 meeting.

I have been hosting the Minister for Water from China during this past week, and regret that I was unable to attend this meeting. The threat of invasive species is a subject that is of special interest to me, and to my colleagues in President Mbeki's Cabinet.

You are all immersed in the various reasons why the *Working for Water* programme does what it does, and I shall not dwell on the programme. I wonder whether any of you read of the outbreak of "foot and mouth" disease in a part of KwaZulu-Natal earlier this week. It has necessitated swift action from Government, and is likely to have an impact on the sale of our meat products in the short-term. As you would all know, "foot and mouth" disease is an invasive species problem. It is thought to have come in through "swill" for pigs from a ship docking at Durban harbour. It is one more good reason why people and their Governments need to take heed of what GISP and its agricultural colleagues are saying.

There is an increasing questioning of the fairness of free trade. There are allegations of barriers being put up to protect vested interests, and that these often end up in the rich getting richer. Bashing trade is an easy pastime, especially when people fail to acknowledge how much it has done - and, more importantly, can do - to promote development. But only now are we beginning to understand the spectre of invasive species as a barrier to free and

fair trade. The ease with which we can move species around poses massive security challenges, and demonstrates the need for GISP and its allied interests to work very closely with the World Trade Organisation.

I have been very impressed by what I have heard about GISP. The extent to which you and others have raised consciousness over the past few years, about the massive threats of invasive species, is impressive. Much needs to be done, though, and I would like to urge you all to be focused and practical in the short-term goals that you set yourselves.

I am delighted that the Secretariat for the second phase of GISP will be based here in Cape Town. We will give its work every support. Invasive species make a mockery of national boundaries. Conversely, they offer scope for collaborative initiatives, such as President Mbeki's call for an African Renaissance, and I am determined that we work with you in dealing with what are all of our problems.

I trust you will leave this GISP meeting with renewed determination to ensure that the second phase of this vital undertaking meets its goals - its realistic goals. On behalf of our Government, and particularly Minister Valli Moosa (the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism) and Minister Thoko Didiza (Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs), I want to pay tribute for what you have achieved to date, and wish you every strength in the future.

END.