

# **Santam / Cape Argus Ukuvuka: Operation Firestop Campaign**

## **Notes for Ministers Kasrils and Moosa**

The launch is at the Silvermine Homestead (opposite the turnoff to Noordhoek from the Ou Kaapse Weg) at 10h00. We shall have people in yellow t-shirts and signage at the bottom of Ou Kaapse Weg, and at the turnoff to the Homestead. The event will be outside if the weather is favourable. Ukuvuka t-shirts and hats will be provided for the dignitaries. Casual dress is recommended.

Minister Kasrils will speak first at the launch, followed by Premier Morkel, the mayors, the South African National Parks representative (Mavuso Msimang is not able to join us), and the sponsors. Minister Moosa will close off the event.

We will then ask the dignitaries to cut down some invading alien plants as part of the Campaign, and then possibly to plant some indigenous plants. Thereafter we shall have light refreshments, and plan to finish by about 11h30.

I would like to recommend that the following points be made by the two Ministers, so that the only duplication is deliberate reinforcement!

### **Minister Kasrils' Speech:**

- The Campaign as a response to the fires.
- The requirements of the Forest and Veld Fires Act.
- The fact that it is to be a role-model, and a basis for similar initiatives around the country.
- The educational benefits of the Campaign (including the building of communities).
- The partnership across tiers of government, and political parties.
- The role of the sponsors.

### **Minister Moosa's Speech:**

- The Table Mountain chain as a World Heritage Site.
- The impact of invading alien plants on biological diversity (especially in this "hottest hot-spot").
- The tourism benefits of the Campaign.
- The social benefits of the Campaign (particularly in employment and training).
- The need for comprehensive legislation for the control of invasive species.
- The need for public participation and media support.

Your speeches will each be up to 10 minutes long. The Premier gets 5 minutes, and the rest up to 3 minutes each. Given the location, I fear that we may start late.

# **Santam / Cape Argus Ukuvuka: Operation Firestop Campaign**

Speech by  
**Minister Ronnie Kasrils, MP**  
Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry

*Silvermine Homestead, 10h00 Sunday 6 February 2000*

Minister Valli Moosa  
Premier Gerald Morkel  
His Worship the Mayor of the Cape Metropolitan Council, Mr William Bantam  
Her Worship the Mayor of the City of Cape Town, Ms Nomaindia Mfeketo  
His Worship the Mayor of the South Peninsula Municipality, Mr OJ Jacobs  
Mr Howard Langley, representing the South African National Parks  
Dr Leon Vermaak, Managing Director of Santam Limited  
Mr Shaun Johnson, Managing Director of Independent Newspapers

Honoured Guests

Goeie môre, molweni, good morning.

Today we are launching a massive response to the fires that swept through 9 000 hectares of the Table Mountain chain – an unprecedented co-ordination of efforts to ensure that such fires never occur again. We surely all know by now that the fires have been a “wake-up” call on a number of fronts, and perhaps most importantly in the fact that we must overcome the scourge of invading alien plants.

These invading alien plants – the wattles, hakea, pines and gums that have spread out of control across our mountain – have a biomass of up to ten times that of the indigenous fynbos vegetation, and (to borrow a phrase that is doing the rounds) are “born to burn”. They duly obliged two weeks ago, and were it not for favourable wind directions, could have fueled the most destructive urban fire in the history of this country.

But this launch is more than this massive response. It is also a pilot approach that can ensure that we take similar measures throughout our country, and build on the vision of the Forest and Veld Fires Act of 1998. If we can work together to ensure that never again are there fires of this magnitude along the Table Mountain chain, through a combination of control actions, education and legislation, then we have a basis for similar approaches in all threatened areas.

The name, Ukuvuka, means to rise up, to awaken. It is appropriate in that we need to rise up to the threat of invading alien plants and other factors that threaten our safety. We need to awaken as a community, to know that together we can do so much more.

The key aspects of this Campaign, then, are two-fold:

- The first is that there must be a co-ordinated effort to deal with the threats that so nearly engulfed many of the suburbs on the periphery of the Cape Peninsula National Park. What we are launching here today is something, regrettably, that is unusual: a Campaign that brings together all tiers of government, the private sector, non-government organizations and private land-owners. If we succeed in this – and our presence here today suggests that we will succeed – then we have the most solid foundation for a long-term victory.

I am particularly pleased to report that the past two weeks have seen intensive negotiations between both political leadership and technical experts within the various authorities. Everyone agrees that this co-ordination is in the enlightened self-interests of us all, and those we represent. It is extremely healthy, particularly when this represents partnerships across party political lines, and I would like to commend all those in national, provincial and local government, and the South African National Parks, for the maturity with which this Campaign has been approached.

- The second key aspect of the Campaign must be educational. It is true that we shall be bringing out co-ordinated legislation to deal with invasive species, and that this will give us powers to control what plants people have on their land (and at their expense). But “carrots” should always precede “sticks”, and the educational opportunities that have arisen out of these fires are too important to miss.

We want those with invading alien plants on their land, and those who are threatened by invading alien plants on others’ land, to become our partners in protecting their security. In terms of the Forestry and Veld Fires Act of 1998, such groups should form associations to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to protect themselves.

We want such land-owners and other affected parties to set up such associations, and we shall provide assistance in terms of planning, mapping, equipment, chemicals and possibly transportation. We will also help to organize the workforce of contractors whom they can employ, through the parent body to this Campaign, the *Working for Water* programme. During the coming week there will be a series of announcements that will inform all interested and affected parties about the things that they can do to help us to help them.

The final thing that I would like to talk about is the joy I have experienced in approaching various companies for financial and technical assistance. In fact, I am delighted to say that, Santam were already beating on our door before we had had time to get going, asking how they could link up with us to respond to the fires. They have made R20 million available over four years, and in addition will bring exceptional financial, legal, auditing and other skills to the overall *Working for Water* programme that will be worth several million rand more. This is a partnership of real substance, and I would like to publicly salute the Managing Director of Santam, Dr Leon Vermaak, and his remarkable Marketing Manager, Mr Steve Zietsman, for their vision, commitment and drive. Within days they had encouraged one of the country’s very best advertising agencies, Hunt Lascaris, to do all of the design work for the Campaign, and we see the fruits of their late-night labour around us. It has been an absolute privilege to work with you, and I trust that this is the beginning of great things.

I also want to pay special tribute to the Independent Newspapers here in the Cape, and particularly to Mr Shaun Johnson, Mr Moegsien Williams and Mr John Lloyd, who so readily met with us, and had a plan of action in embryo form before the first meeting was completed. They have agreed to give the Campaign R5,4 million rand in advertising space, in addition to editorial coverage that is expected to be worth an even greater sum of money. Furthermore, they have seconded their hugely talented environmental reporter, Mr John Yeld, to drive the communication programme for the Campaign. As with Santam, I must emphasize that one cannot put a value on the expertise and insights that they are so willingly sharing with us. To the Independent Newspapers and the Cape Argus, I speak for all Capetonians, indeed all South Africans, when I commend your highly evolved sense of community responsibility and environmental commitment. Thank you.

During the next two weeks we hope to announce five associate sponsors of the Campaign. However, it gives me great pleasure to “jump the gun”, so to speak, by announcing that Total (South Africa) will be one of the five associated sponsors. Such was their interest in the project, that their Chief Executive, Mr Jacques Sellschop, came through to my home in Cape Town to discuss the Campaign. Total has pledged to find R5 million over the four years, in support of the Campaign. I know that there are those who feel that the big companies can easily find emergency funding. They are wrong. Their budgets are meticulously planned well in advance, and this partnership by Total reflects their commitment to all that this Campaign promises for reconstruction and development in our country.

The very generous support that the World Wide Fund for Nature (South Africa) and the South African National Parks were able to gain from the Global Environmental Facility (which is linked to the World Bank) deserves special mention. The South African National Parks and the *Working for Water* programme have already spent R25 million in fighting the scourge of invading alien plants on Table Mountain chain, and will provide a further R50 million over the next four years.

I shall leave the announcements about other contributions to a later stage, but want to end with the challenge that we want the people who live around the mountain to join us in raising the funds that we need so that we shall never again burn like that. There are so many other areas that need such support that it is only fair that we single out the beneficiaries – those whose houses will be at a far lower risk from fires, flooding, mudslides and the like – if we are successful. I want to challenge those living around the mountain to make their contributions to the Campaign – a pledge number will be issued tomorrow – and to raise a minimum of R10 million for the Campaign.

Land-owners who have invading alien plants on their land must now contribute to the costs of clearing them. We are offering the carrot of partnership in helping you to take control over the ecological integrity of your land. We do not want to have to resort to the alternative of using a stick to achieve this goal. But you must be in no doubt that we shall achieve our goal.

[As Minister of Forestry, may I make a plea to people to recognize the forestry industry as offering a particularly good return on investment in the land and water it uses. Well-managed plantations that are in the right places are an absolute asset to this country. Here we are talking about invading alien species that spread out of control, and not the profitable and controlled use of indigenous species.]

A final point is that we shall take particular care to ensure that this programme helps those in poorer communities along the mountain chain to fire-proof their communities. Those in the richer suburbs do have savings, insurance and other means that allow them to emerge relatively unscathed from fires. The poor often are left with nothing. In fact, such is the importance of this that I am pleased to announce that the Campaign will seek to have two satellite pilot case-studies in the Cape Flats, so that we learn all lessons that we can from the risks that people face.

I offer my most sincere thanks to all who have worked so hard to make this Campaign possible. It has brought out the best in us all, and that is the surest recipe for success. Forward, Ukuvuka, forward!

END

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## **Official Launch**

**Silvermine Homestead**

**10h00  
6 February 2000**

Host: Mr Mbongeni Mondlane (The *Working for Water* Programme)

1. The Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Mr Ronnie Kasrils (10)
2. The Premier of the Western Cape, Mr Gerald Morkel (5)
3. The Mayor of the Cape Metropolitan Council, His Worship William Bantam (3)
4. The Mayor of the City of Cape Town, Her Worship Nomaindia Mfeketo (3)
5. The Mayor of the South Peninsula Municipality, His Worship OJ Jacobs (3)
6. A representative of the South African National Parks (3)
7. The Managing Director of Santam Limited, Dr Leon Vermaak (3)
8. The Managing Director of Independent Newspapers, Mr Shaun Johnson (3)
9. A representative of Total (South Africa) (3)
10. The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mr Valli Moosa (10)

The dignitaries will then cut down some invading alien plants.

Thereafter they will plant an indigenous tree.

Light refreshments will be served at approximately 11h30.