

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DDG: BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION MR  
FUNDISILE MKETENI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF THE MOA  
BETWEEN DEA, SANPARKS COAL HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT SHERATON  
HOTEL, PRETORIA, FROM 10:00 TO 12:00AM**

In light of the past criticisms, from both national and the internationally community on the issuance of a mining right some 7 km in the eastern border of an area that, its conservation value is expressed through recognition as part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, part of a Transfrontier Conservation Areas (i.e, with Botswana and Zimbabwe), a World Heritage Site and a national park as well as a National Heritage Site, the department, SANParks and the mining company found it befitting to maintain the spirit of transparency on this matter by continuing to inform the country and the international community when an unprecedented breakthrough had been made.

As you heard from the presentations from the South African National Parks and the mining company, the parties agreed to a long term cooperative approach that will enable the three institutions to work together to preserve and protect the conservation values of the area whilst at the same time allowing measured sustainable development in the area. This new commitment is contained in the Memorandum of Agreement that the parties will signing.

Amongst others, agreement intends to ensure that the commitment of the country to secure the integrity of Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape World Heritage Site is maintained into the future through “comprehensive biodiversity offsets programmes, thereby optimising benefits to local communities”. Parallel to this initiative, the South African Botanical Institute (SANBI) has been mandate to undertake a national process of development national guidelines for biodiversity offsets which once completed will influence the activities in the area as well.

In the context of the MoA that is to be signed, the parties agree to:

- promote alliances in the management of natural and cultural resources;
- ensure compliance with the provisions of the MoA;
- encourage social, economic and other partnerships among stakeholders;
- promote integrated planning, research, education, awareness and capacity-building;
- collaborate in formulating detailed biodiversity offsets programmes and implementation plans; and
- provide adequate financial, human and other resources for the effective implementation of the MoA.

Regarding the detailed biodiversity offsets programmes to be developed, the MoA states that the programmes will be underpinned by, amongst others, the following components:

- natural heritage conservation;
- cultural heritage conservation;
- tourism development; and
- water resource management.

These components for offsets will be translated into more comprehensive programmes and implementation plans.

The Parties further understands the significance of a wider stakeholder engagement and in order to achieve this, the Parties agreed to the establishment of an environmental management committee or steering committee, as well as relevant sub-committees.

Further, the parties to the MoA agree to:

- ensure periodic review and updating of the biodiversity offsets programmes and implementation plans;
- ensure effective participation of other key stakeholders, including government and non-governmental organisations, communities, landowners, the academic community and the private sector at international, national and local levels in the implementation of the MoA; and
- develop means whereby local communities sustainably benefit from the use of natural and cultural resources occurring within the World Heritage Site.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for gracing this event with your attendance and I would also like to convey our continued commitment to the conservation of all our conservation worthy areas. The country therefore looks forward to further deepen its collaboration with the private sector in the conservation of our protected area. In this context, the country has committed to host together with the African World Heritage Fund and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre an African Workshop on World Heritage and Sustainable Development. The date for this event will be announced soon.