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PRESS RELEASE 26 AUGUST 2011

LAUNCH OF OBSERVATIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA



Professor Larry Zietsman (Editor) presents a copy of the publication *Observations on Environmental Change in South Africa* to the Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology, Dr Phil Mjwara

OBSERVATIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Larry Zietsman (Editor)

When there is scientific evidence that the ice cap of Marion Island has already melted by 60% in the past 50 years, and the surrounding oceans became warmer by some 1,5 degrees Celsius over the past 40 years, who can still deny that climate change should be taken very seriously by scientists and policy-makers alike?

Observations on Environmental Change in South Africa looks at how environmental changes are progressively affecting the future of South Africans through their combined impacts on human livelihood, security and prosperity. "As custodians of finite natural resources we do not have the luxury of being complacent. This highly illustrative book provides a glimpse into the environmental changes that have been observed...it outlines the potential consequences of failing to act." – Prof Larry Zietsman, Editor

The book was launched at a landmark event in Stellenbosch on the 22nd of August 2011 and combines knowledge and interpretation of environmental change at an unprecedented scale. The environmental change wisdoms captured therein present serious challenges for South African Business, the South African Government, the environmental science community, and all citizens for generations to come.

Observations on Environmental Change in South Africa is a richly illustrated and multi-disciplinary publication that gives a complete picture of environmental change and describes the principal problems and the main drivers of environmental changes, how the environment is responding, and how these problems can be solved. In addition, the book outlines the potential socio-economic consequences of failing to act. It covers a wide spectrum of subjects including the human being's role in and vulnerability to changes as observed in the atmospheric system and observed phenomena in the terrestrial, freshwater and marine and coastal environments.

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In his welcoming address, Johan Pauw, Managing Director of the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), said: *“It is said that those who predict do not really know and those who know do not easily predict. Predictions of change are necessary but seldom accurate. The knowledge of those who are in the know will have little value if not shared to help predict the future in wise and informed ways. Today we celebrate such an effort by scientists to guide South Africa in its efforts to understand global change so that we can adapt and mitigate to such change with wisdom.”*

More than a hundred authors from 32 local and 8 international organisations joined SAEON in bringing this 300-page book to publication. The project took more than three years to complete and is a tangible example of what is possible when scientists from diverse disciplines and institutions collaborate. What is remarkable is that all their efforts were voluntary, which has enabled SAEON and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to make the book available free of charge, in the interests of the broad dissemination of global change research results. In his keynote address, Dr Phil Mjwara, Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), described the book as *“a ground-breaking publication that will have a long-lasting effect on science and environmental policy.”*

“The idea for the book came from Dr. Albert van Jaarsveld, President and CEO of the National Research Foundation (NRF), who saw the relevance and necessity for a book to promote the work of SAEON, especially amongst politicians and decision makers, who by nature of their work may not have much time to delve into the intricacies of scientific papers on environmental change.” – Larry Zietsman, editor.

Observations on Environmental Change in South Africa examines, amongst other issues, why although South Africa’s population is still increasing, population size is not *per se* the main driver of environmental change – in fact, it is unsustainable land-use practices and inadequate management policies that should concern us. It is thus an extremely useful publication in that it exposes these rapidly mainstream environmental considerations and trends, providing a snapshot of pertinent scientific evidence that will assist in formulating intelligent and responsible policies and practices for the betterment of our society and to ensure the long-term futures of South Africans.

Although rich in scientific content, *Observations on Environmental Change in South Africa* is written in an easy-to-read style which makes it accessible to a wide audience, including decision makers in government, civil society and business. The value for each reader lies therein that it provides an overview of environmental change with short pieces provided by leading scientists for a better understanding of what needs to be done to solve these problems.

Observations on Environmental Change in South Africa is published by SUN MeDIA Stellenbosch.

The book is now also available as a free e-book (downloadable in PDF format) from: www.africansunmedia.co.za

Environmental changes are progressively affecting the future of South Africans through their combined impacts on human livelihood, security and prosperity.

This book is about environmental change in South Africa, its causes, trends, implications, suggested solutions and the technologies and methodologies of observation and analysis. It draws together work from as many scientific disciplines as possible to inform not only the private sector and political decision makers, but also the general public on current environmental issues and challenges.

Observations on Environmental Change in South Africa provides pertinent scientific evidence to assist the people of our country in formulating intelligent and responsible policies and practices for the betterment of our society and to ensure the long-term sustainable futures of South Africans.

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ENVIRONMENTAL
CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA
& COMBAT CHANGE WITH CHANGE**

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in SOUTH AFRICA
Edited by LARRY ZIETSMAN

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