

MEDIA RELEASE

BAY EVENT AIMS TO REDUCE OCEAN WASTE

The African Marine Waste Conference from 9 to 13 July in Port Elizabeth is no ordinary conference; it will be inspirational, with a focus on action, innovations, opportunities and solutions.

The first formal activity of the conference is on Sunday 9 July, when the yacht *Boaz* will sail from the Algoa Bay Yacht Club with a fleet of other boats as a public call to action to reduce waste entering the seas from land and from vessels.

After the morning sail, renowned US Based, National Geographic Explorer in Residence, also the architect of the Global Hope Spot initiative, Dr. Sylvia Earle, will officially launch the partnership between Sustainable Seas Trust and *Boaz*.

Together they will promote research, education and awareness in Southern African Hope Spots and the Western Indian Ocean, with a focus on marine debris. To join this celebration, be there, at the Algoa Bay Yacht Club at 12 noon on 9 July.

In 2015, Capetonian Keith Wetmore had travelled the east coast of Madagascar and found flotillas of plastic bottles floating down her rivers, headed to sea. He had since determined to use the *Boaz* his 19m Boden-designed, twin mast yacht to help stem the tide of plastic entering the oceans.

He partnered with [Sustainable Seas Trust](#) to further this mission and now the yacht will be used for three things: promoting awareness of plastic use and effects through education, enabling marine research, and fostering relations between South Africa and Madagascar.

Conference sneak peak

The first two days of conference at the Feathermarket Centre are devoted to environmental issues, education, research, data and reality checks. The focus is not on how bad things are, but rather on opportunities to change, educate, innovate, find solutions, discuss and agree on action. Dr Sylvia Earle is the first keynote speaker, who will set the scene and share the changes the seas have undergone since she first began pioneering diving decades ago. Undoubtedly, she will provide strong pointers to the positive actions we in Africa need to take going forwards.

Not business as usual for industry

The third day is devoted to industry sections, but with an alternative program including questioning our current position and how we should do better, how to innovate, to develop economic enterprises, find solutions and seek alternatives to plastics. Some will recognize plastic as an amazing product, arguing that life would be very difficult without it, others will seek to reduce its use. There will be feisty debates as we collectively find solutions.

On the vital final day, ordinary citizens and global experts will share ideas at carefully structured workshops to develop the content of the "*Marine Waste Strategy: Guide to Action for Africa*", a document containing guidelines to mitigate Africa's waste problems.

International representation

An exciting aspect of the conference is delegate attendance from all over the world: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, United Kingdom and America. Included among these are several top global experts .

For more information visit www.sstconference.org.za

BACKGROUND

Aimed at developing a pan-African strategy to combat rampant marine pollution off Africa's coast, the inaugural African Marine Waste Conference will take place in Port Elizabeth, South Africa on the south-east tip of the continent from July 9-13, 2017.

"With 350 kg's of plastic being dumped in the ocean every second, it is projected that there will be more plastics than fish in the ocean by 2050. This pollution is killing millions of marine animals and sea birds each year, damaging sensitive ecosystems, affecting environmental and human health. Aside from lost opportunities the cost to Africa runs into billions annually," says SST Director Dr Tony Ribbink.

"Africa is data poor on the matter of marine waste on both sea and land, and limited research has been done so far, meaning that management and development of informed strategies is being impeded," he said.

The Conference is hosted by the African Marine Waste Network, initiated by the Sustainable Seas Trust (SST).

The Network is the first dedicated approach to address marine waste at a pan-African level. Ribbink, said the conference provides the next major step forward. It addresses a continent, connected to a world grappling with sustainable, innovative and effective solutions, he says.

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