

**5 JULY 2017**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

### **AFRICAN MARINE WASTE STRATEGY TO BE DEVELOPED IN NELSON MANDELA BAY**

The first pan-African strategy to deal with marine waste is the key outcome of the African Marine Waste Conference, which runs from 9-13 July in Port Elizabeth.

Over 200 delegates, including many of the world's leading environmentalists, from more than 15 countries will present and digest the latest research and industry perspectives on the status of waste in the oceans, before crafting a pan-African plan for combating the continent's accelerating pollution problem.

Conference Organiser Dr Tony Ribbink CEO of the Sustainable Seas Trust said it was estimated that 350 kg's of plastic was reaching the ocean every second, which could potentially create the situation in 2050 where the ocean would contain more plastics than fish .

"This pollution is killing millions of marine animals and sea birds each year, damaging sensitive ecosystems, affecting environmental and human health. Aside from this fundamental degradation, the cost to Africa runs in to billions annually," says 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 has attracted more than 30 of the world's leading researchers, including US based environmental superstar Sylvia Earle.

The presence of Ted Prize winner Earle, a National Geographic Society Explorer-in-Residence, who has 22 honorary degrees and more than a hundred national and international honours, is considered a major coup for the Metro.

Dr. Sylvia A. Earle, called a "Hero for the Planet" by *Time* magazine, is an oceanographer, explorer, author, and lecturer.

In addition to Earle other notable participants include Ivory Coast's **Abou Bamba** the Executive Secretary of The Abidjan Convention, an intergovernmental coastal and marine conservation treaty, and US-based **Nancy Wallace** the Director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Debris Program the federal lead for researching, preventing, and reducing the impacts of marine debris in the United States.

Wallace, the Chair of the United Nation's Global Partnership on Marine Litter, and Co-Chair of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation's Marine Debris Working Group, will be joined by other internationals including **Chris Wilcox** a research scientist with CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research, stationed in Hobart, Tasmania, **Dr. Jenna Jambeck** an Associate Professor in the College of Engineering at the University of Georgia, and the co-developer of the mobile app - Marine Debris Tracker and **Kristian Teleki** the Senior Marine Adviser to the Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit and the Director of Engagement for Ocean Unite, among others.

Plenary speakers will be joined by over 30 break-away presenters sharing cutting edge research and innovation.

According to Ribbink, the Conference, to be held at the Feathermarket Centre, with the support of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality as host, the SA Tourism National Convention Bureau and Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency, seeks to address a continent, connected to a world grappling with sustainable, innovative and effective solutions, he says.

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, public is invited to the Algoa Bay Yacht Club at 12 noon on 9 July.

The first two days of conference at the Feathermarket Centre are devoted to environmental issues, education, research, data and reality checks. The third day is focussed to industry sections, but with an alternative program including questioning our current position, how to innovate, to develop economic enterprises, find solutions and seek alternatives to plastics

On the final day, Ribbink says, 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.

For more information view [www.sstconference.org.za](http://www.sstconference.org.za)

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## **BACKGROUND**

Tapping into the already established African Marine Waste Network, the Conference (including site tours, networking functions, conference and exhibition) aims to develop an effective Marine Waste

Strategy for Africa and facilitate a guide to best practice for waste management and harnessing a circular economy approach.

"Through collaboration, African nations can benefit from improved resource efficiency, job creation and economic development while helping safeguard its diverse and rich environment," Ribbink said,

"As waste knows no boundaries, this conference aims to draw together participants from all African coastal and island states. In addition, the Network wishes to benefit from the insights and findings from other parts of the world, so a truly global attention will focus on finding the best possible practices for Africa."

Participants, as delegates, speakers and exhibitors, would represent not only academia, researchers and policy makers but also industry which will showcase innovative marine waste solutions and products.

"Anyone that operates a business linked to the sea, who is concerned about the sustainability of the marine resource or who is seeking solutions and global best practice, should attend," says Ribbink.

Over the course of the four days, conference delegates will experience unparalleled opportunities for extensive networking, site tours, inspiring keynotes, and a comprehensive exhibition floor filled with new and innovative approaches to plastics, with specific relevance to meeting the challenges of waste in African waters.

"Waste is a transboundary issue that requires collaboration on a regional, national, continental, and even global scale. Moreover, existing data and legislation on marine waste in Africa is both sparse and fragmented, emphasizing the need for action.

The AMWC will bring together and growing a network of researchers, educators, other practitioners, NGO's, business, media, and governments to meet the pollution challenges facing Africa," Ribbink said.

Among a range of world class speakers already confirmed to speak on the conference is **Sylvia Earle**.

*"People ask: Why should I care about the ocean? Because the ocean is the cornerstone of earth's life support system, it shapes climate and weather. It holds most of life on earth. 97% of earth's water is there. It's the blue heart of the planet — we should take care of our heart. It's what makes life possible for us. We still have a really good chance to make things better than they are. They won't get better unless we take the action and inspire others to do the same thing. No one is without power. Everybody has the capacity to do something."*

— [Sylvia A. Earle](#): Key Note speaker at African Marine Waste Conference 2017.

Earle has experience as a field research scientist, government official, and director for corporate and nonprofit organizations, including the Kerr McGee Corporation, Dresser Industries, Oryx Energy, the Aspen Institute, the Conservation Fund, American Rivers, Mote Marine Laboratory, Duke University Marine Laboratory, Rutgers Institute for Marine Science, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, and Ocean Futures.

Formerly chief scientist of NOAA, Earle is the founder of Deep Ocean Exploration and Research, Inc., founder of Mission Blue and SEAlliance, and chair of the Advisory Councils of the Harte Research

Institute and the Ocean in Google Earth. She has a B.S. degree from Florida State University, M.S. and PhD. from Duke University, and 22 honorary degrees. She has authored more than 190 scientific, technical, and popular publications; lectured in more than 80 countries; and appeared in hundreds of radio and television productions.

Earle has led more than a hundred expeditions and logged more than 7,000 hours underwater; and set a record for solo diving in 1,000-meter depth.

Her special focus is on developing a global network of areas on the land and in the ocean to safeguard the living systems that provide the underpinnings of global processes, from maintaining biodiversity and yielding basic life support services to providing stability and resiliency in response to accelerating climate change.

Earle is the recipient of more than a hundred national and international honors and in 2014 was named a Glamour Woman of the Year. Other honors include the 2011 Royal Geographical Society Gold Medal, 2011 Medal of Honor from the Dominican Republic, 2009 TED Prize, Netherlands Order of the Golden Ark, Australia's International Banksia Award, Italy's Artiglio Award, the International Seakeepers Award, the International Women's Forum, the National Women's Hall of Fame, Academy of Achievement, Los Angeles Times Woman of the Year, and medals from the Explorers Club, the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences, Lindbergh Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, Sigma Xi, Barnard College, and the Society of Women Geographers. (Source: National Geographic : <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/bios/sylvia-earle/>)