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PEACE WITH NATURE- A THEME FOR COP16, A WAY OF LIFE FOR ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK

iSimangaliso Wetland Park CEO, Mr Sibusiso Bukhosini, recently attended the 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference that was held in Cali, Colombia. He formed part of the South African delegation that included the Deputy Minister of the DFFE, Mr Narend Singh and the Deputy Director-General of Biodiversity and Conservation, Ms Mohlago Mokgohloa. COP16 began on the 21st of October 2024 and ended on the 1st of November 2024.



At the center is the Deputy Minister of the DFFE Narend Singh, flanked by the Deputy Director General of Biodiversity and Conservation Ms Mohlago Mokgohloa on the left, and the CEO of iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority Mr Sibusiso Bukhosini on the right

Throughout COP16, the CEO Bukhosini, engaged in thought provoking discussions around financial mechanisms that will generate funds towards defending the critically at risk environment. Under the theme, 'Peace with Nature', this was the first COP Summit to deal with resource mobilisation as there is an outlined need to raise \$20 billion USD per year, and ultimately, \$200 billion USD by 2030. iSimangaliso is currently on a mission to increase the Parks financial revenue and this economic mindset is in alignment with that of the President of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, who in 2019 stated that, "South Africa must benefit from its own mineral wealth and be a producer of value-added goods".

Initial COP16 discussions were focused on ways to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Framework (GBF). This Framework was introduced at COP15 which was held in Montreal, Canada in 2022. As part of this Framework, there are 23 action-oriented global targets for urgent action, that need to be initiated and completed by the year 2030. The first target of the GBF is to- **Plan and Manage All Areas To Reduce Biodiversity Loss**. iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority currently has strategies in place that focus on biodiversity loss reduction, and this speaks to how the Park Authority is hands on in keeping up with the United Nations guidelines on conservation across the globe, as iSimangaliso is a UNESCO World heritage site.

Furthermore, the South African delegation made an impact during talks around how developing countries, that are rich in biodiversity, can benefit from Digital Sequence Information (DSI), which leads to revenue generation through the sale of resources for medicine and research purposes. Traditional healers play a huge role in the green economy of our Nation, and they have not been excluded from consideration regarding the implementation of DSI, as they are stewards of ancient knowledge, that taps into the cultivation and preservation of biodiversity at large. There is a huge emphasis on South Africa benefiting from all four pillars of biodiversity, namely; species diversity, ecological diversity, genetic diversity and functional diversity. Therefore, all participants of COP16, have unanimously decided, that there must be fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from commercial and other utilisation of genetic resources. Contributions from the South African delegation, will no doubt, be shaping all future biodiversity and conservation efforts in South Africa moving forward.

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Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

For media enquires please contact :

Mr Bheki Manzini Call/WhatsApp: 060 533 2082

Email: bhekimanzini@isimangaliso.com