



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



A circular economy promoted at WasteCon2014

*WasteCon2014 - Wired for Waste: Value * Grow * Sustain*

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Caption: One of the highlights of the 22nd biennial WasteCon was the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA)'s reporting session on the new National Environmental Management Waste Amendment Act, Act 26 of 2014 (NEMWAA 2014) published on 02 June 2014. Mark Gordon (above), Deputy Director-General: Chemicals and Waste Management at the DEA opened this thought-provoking session at the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA)'s flagship conference – WasteCon2014, which recently took place in Somerset West, Western Cape.

With over 450 delegates and 70 exhibitors, Africa's leading waste management conference, WasteCon, did not disappoint. More than 90 seminars and workshops facilitated dialogue and presented a platform to share best practice in the waste industry. The topic of a circular economy, which focuses on extracting the maximum value out of a resource, received a lot of attention in the sessions and The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) confirmed that Government is promoting a restorative system in waste management.

The DEA's two-hour awareness raising and reporting session on the National Environmental Management Waste Amendment Act, Act 26 of 2014 (NEMWAA 2014) gave delegates the chance to familiarise themselves with the new Act set in motion earlier this year. Mark Gordon kicked off the session by reiterating the Department's commitment to sustainable development. Gordon emphasised that industry and Government need to work together to help protect the environment and encourage engagement to effectively implement waste management best practice. He also stressed that there needs to be incentives for industry when it comes to waste management.

“I think we are standing on the threshold of a new waste revolution in South Africa,” says Gordon. “There is a fantastic opportunity for the waste sector to chart its own path and Government is here to support you (industry),” adds Gordon.

Gordon also indicated the transformation of the waste sector in primarily three areas namely regulatory reforms (NEMWAA 2014, regulations and Industry Waste Management Plan), institutional reforms (Waste Bureau and the Waste Management Council for South Africa and Technical Advisory fora to follow) and economic reforms (pricing strategy, deposit systems, incentives and infrastructure).

Gordon highlighted that the waste sector has many challenges, especially with urbanisation and constant consumer and lifestyle changes, but Government and industry should view waste as an opportunity and renewable resource.

Another development is the introduction of the Waste Bureau, a specialist implementation entity of the Department. Kgauta Mokoena, Chief Director: Chemicals and Waste Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation at the DEA, said that the Bureau will provide specialist services on waste management and promote and facilitate minimisation, re-use, recycling and recovery of waste in South Africa. The Bureau has been established by NEMWAA 2014 and is being resourced like all government entities and through among other means, the secondment of DEA staff until the position of the CEO and other posts in the Bureau are filled.

Anben Pillay, Director: Waste Policy and Information Management at the DEA said their objective is ‘less waste, better managed’. He stated that waste is currently being undervalued and the objective of the new pricing strategy is to put a correct price on waste in order to divert it from landfill sites. The DEA encouraged industry to engage and communicate the value of waste and work together with Government. Pillay acknowledged that there are current systems in the industry that are working well and that the pricing strategy should not undo all the good work that has already been done.

“We would like to thank the DEA for their participation at WasteCon2014 and the promotion of dialogue during the conference. The IWMSA urges all industry players to participate in giving feedback and engaging with the Department to ultimately achieve a restorative, circular waste economy in South Africa,” says Dr Suzan Oelofse, President of the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA).

For more information about the IWMSA, visit www.iwmsa.co.za. IWMSA is also on Facebook (www.facebook.com/iwmsa), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>) and LinkedIn.

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