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**ENVIRONMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1972-1992:  
AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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M.S. Steyn  
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## PREFACE

"In this particular part of the globe we have subdued the land, fenced in its creatures and harnessed its wild rivers. It was a massive task at first - foolhardy almost - but now we have emerged totally victorious. And it might be our trouble: our victory was too total. In places nature has capitulated leaving behind poisoned, lifeless streams; exhausted infertile soil; and each spring becomes more silent."

- John Jordi<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that humankind's concern for the environment dates back many centuries, the concept of nature as an infinite resource that could be exploited as humankind saw fit, prevailed. The environmental revolution of the 1960s shattered this belief and recurrent environmental disasters in the late sixties brought home the finite capability of the natural environment to absorb unchecked industrial and demographic growth.

The perceived environmental crisis compelled governments and the United Nations (UN) to address the widespread environmental degradation, which was duly done when the UN convened the historic United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm in June 1972. UNCHE was very important, for not only was it the first international environmental conference of its kind, but it also succeeded in placing the environment on national and international political agendas. Twenty years later, in June 1992, the governments of the world met again, this time in Rio de Janeiro, for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to reconsider the paths taken since UNCHE in the quest for a viable future for humankind. The Rio summit redirected the course of the global environmental movement towards the goal of sustainable development. It further established that environmental problems were not confined to national and/or regional boundaries, but were in fact global problems and that all role-players had a duty to conserve the natural environment, not for the sake of the citizens of individual countries, but for humankind as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Star*, 10.3.1971, p. 22.

Despite the fact that the natural environment was in a better state in 1972 than in 1992, the twenty years in between represents an important formative period in which the global environmental movement developed rapidly from the first tentative steps taken to improve the environment in 1972, to acknowledging by 1992 that the world at large needed a new development model (namely sustainable development) if humankind and other life forms were to survive. On a national level, these developments included the institutionalisation of environmental affairs within government structures, the implementation of wide-ranging environmental legislation and policy, and the activities of non-governmental role-players. On an international level, the UN, its specialised agencies and other interested parties worked towards improving the environment through programmes and conventions aimed at getting the governments of the world involved in and committed to strategies to remedy the environmental degradation.

South Africa's position within the global environmental movement between 1972 and 1992 was dubious at best. Due to the government's domestic policy of apartheid, the country was isolated in the international political arena and thus had limited opportunities to contribute to the global efforts to improve the environment. On a national level, both the government and non-governmental role-players responded to some aspects of the new environmental agenda established as a result of the global preoccupation with the perceived environmental crisis of the 1960s and early 1970s. However, in contrast to national movements elsewhere in the world, the response in South Africa was initially characterised by its apolitical nature. The environment only became a political issue in the country from 1988 onwards with the founding of a new breed of environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS), such as Earthlife Africa, which managed to place the environment on the anti-apartheid agenda.

This study aims at exploring the history of South African environmentalism from UNCHE in 1972 until UNCED in 1992. These dates were specifically chosen for their importance in the global environmental movement: the modern environmental movement is first and foremost a global phenomenon, and as such any history on environmentalism in South Africa between 1972 and 1992 should be projected against, and can only be understood in the context of, the events that took place

globally in the same period. The purpose of this study is thus, firstly, to trace the environmental track record (e.g. including developments in environmental administration, policy and legislation, and actions that directly affected the environment) of the South African government between 1972 and 1992; secondly, to trace the history of non-governmental environmental activities by South African ENGOS and other role-players within the same period; and thirdly, to determine the reciprocal impacts between the government and non-governmental role-players.

The value of this study lies in the fact that no historical study of environmentalism in South Africa between 1972 and 1992, which addresses both the government's environmental administration, policy, legislation and actions, and the contributions made by ENGOS and other interested parties in the country, has yet been undertaken. As such, the study serves as an introduction to this wide historical field and will attempt to provide a basis for future studies on the history of the environmental movement in South Africa. Although research for this study was wide, spatial limitations do not allow for a comprehensive account of all the events in South African environmentalism. As a result, attention will only be paid to the major events and paradigm shifts within the movement.

The parameters of this study will be confined to the concerns of the environmental movement's agenda (e.g. including environmental policy, legislation and administration, proposed developments, pollution, occupational health and hazardous waste disposal), and will not include the history of heritage and built-conservation in South Africa. The conservation of fauna and flora is not a major concern of the environmental movement, and therefore limited attention will be paid to the establishment of national parks, and nature and game reserves.

Proceeding from the viewpoint that it is the responsibility of every government to pay continual and constructive attention to environmental issues, this study will, *inter alia*, address the following themes from a historical-scientific perspective to obtain answers to several central questions: What were the nature and the main focus of the South African government's environmental policy from 1972 to 1992? How did the government administer environmental affairs in South Africa in the same period?

How did the South African government respond to the global challenge and to what extent did it participate in the global interstate environmental movement? What were the focus areas of non-governmental role-players in the South African environmental movement? How did they co-operate and interact with the government? When did the paradigm shift from narrow conservationism to a broader environmental agenda start to occur within the ENGO-sector in South Africa? Who were the main role-players in this regard and to which environmental problems did the attention shift?

The thesis is structured along the following lines: Chapter 1 serves as a theoretical introduction to the term *environmentalism*, the scope of an historical approach to environmentalism, the nature of the history of environmentalism, contemporary environmental thought and the historiography of environmentalism. In theory and in practice the environmental movement is a divided movement, which necessitates a brief theoretical overview of the main positions. Chapter 2 provides a brief account of the main components of global environmentalism between 1972 and 1992, in order to establish the global background against which the events in South Africa, in the same period, should be projected. In Chapter 3 a brief historical overview of the roots of environmentalism in South Africa is given, addressing the development of governmental and public concern with environmental issues between 1652 and 1972. This will be done to place the events of 1972 to 1992 in historical perspective.

Chapter 4 focuses on South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1982, paying particular attention to the institutionalisation of environmental affairs. Chapter 5 deals with the transitional phase in the development of South African environmentalism (1982-1988), in which the movement gradually started to move away from its preoccupation with the conservation of natural resources, fauna and flora towards a broad-ranging environmental agenda. Chapter 6 focuses on the emergence of "new" environmentalism in South Africa in 1988 and the politicisation of environmental issues in the country between 1988 and 1992. It is important to note that, due to differences in the environmental concerns of the three identifiable phases of South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992, the structures of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 differ. As mentioned earlier, it is important to keep in mind that only the major events and paradigm shifts will be highlighted in Chapters 1 through

to 6. The thesis concludes with an evaluation (Chapter 7) of South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992.

This study will use the reformational philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) as philosophical foundation. Within this philosophical movement, human beings are seen as the central role-players in creation who have the responsibility of caring for and preserving the earth. The reformational philosophy also serves as historiographical framework and is particularly suited for a study of environmentalism since it demands an holistic approach to the subject matter whilst, at the same time, allowing for the individuality of the various components. The research is undertaken with the conviction that an historian should adhere to the principles of responsible historiography, i.e. that despite pre-scientific assumptions which influence scientific work, all the parties involved should be treated fairly and given the opportunity to voice their points of view.

Some of the terminology used in this study requires a brief explanation. While acknowledging that some scholars might hold that the term *environmentalism* refers to an ideology, with all its associated negative connotations, when used in this thesis *environmentalism* refers to all the various components of the environmental movement. The term, for the purpose of this study, firstly, does not imply anything negative, and secondly, is used synonymously with the phrase *environmental movement*. It is further important to note that the historical context determines the terminology used in the thesis. The South African government started a name-changing process in 1994, which subsequently led to changes in the official names of many state departments and institutions, e.g. the South African Defence Force became the South African National Defence Force. Since 1992 is the cut-off date for the study, state departments and institutions will be referred to by using their official names between 1972 and 1992. The same applies to the geographical and political division of the country into provinces. The present division into nine provinces only came into being in 1994 when it replaced the four provinces (the Cape, Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal) that existed in both the Union and the Republic of South Africa from 1910 to 1994.

The relative contemporary historical period that constitutes the main focus of this study (i.e. 1972-1992) posed certain research challenges: firstly, hardly any archival sources are available on the subject; secondly, the general lack of traditional historical sources on environmentalism in South Africa between 1972 and 1992 necessitated the use of sources that predominantly address natural scientific, administrative and/or legal aspects of environmental issues. Research was further complicated by the popular and, at times, biased nature of sources that deal with environmentalism in the country. The comprehensive source list is, nevertheless, a reflection of the vast number of sources that in some way or other deal with the topic, and which were consulted in an effort to put the relevant and sometimes controversial topic of environmentalism in South Africa into historical perspective.

During the research for and the writing of this thesis, numerous themes in the history of South African environmentalism that still need to be researched were identified, for example a comprehensive and unbiased account of the social, economic and political impact of apartheid on the environment; the development of corporate environmental concern and policy in South Africa, and individual histories of certain South African ENGOs, notably the Dolphin Action and Protection Group, Earthlife Africa, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the Habitat Council, the Society for the Protection of the Environment, the World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa, and the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (the latter from 1973 onwards).

\* \* \*

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Phia Steyn

Bloemfontein

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AEB	- Atomic Energy Board
ANC	- African National Congress
ANSCA	- African National Soil Conservation Association
APAC	- Air Pollution Appeal Committee
AWS	- African Wildlife Society
Azapo	- Azanian People's Organisation
BCM	- Black Consciousness Movement
BLM	- Bureau of Land Management
Botsoc	- Botanical Society of South Africa
CAP	- Consumers Against Pollution
CARE	- Cleaner Air, Rivers and Environment
CBO	- Community-based organisation
CEQ	- Council on Environmental Quality
CFCs	- Chlorofluorocarbons
CITES	- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
Codesa	- Convention for a Democratic South Africa
CP	- Conservative Party
CSD	- Commission on Sustainable Development
CSIR	- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CTEG	- Cape Town Ecology Group
CWIU	- Chemical Workers Industrial Union
DAPG	- Dolphin Action and Protection Group
DDT	- Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane
DP	- Democratic Party
EDA	- Environment and Development Agency
EEASA	- Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa
EF!	- Earth First!
EIA	- Environmental Impact Assessment
EJNF	- Environmental Justice Networking Forum
ELA	- Earthlife Africa
ENGO	- Environmental non-governmental organisation

EP	- European Parliament
EPA	- Environmental Protection Agency
EPPIC	- Environmental Planning Professions Interdisciplinary Committee
Escom	- Electricity Suppliers Commission
ETH	- Eastern Transvaal Highveld
EWT	- Endangered Wildlife Trust
FAO	- Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAWU	- Food and Allied Workers' Union
FNLA	- Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola
FoE	- Friends of the Earth
FoEI	- Friends of the Earth International
HC	- Habitat Council
IAEA	- International Atomic Energy Agency
IEF	- Industrial Environmental Forum
IFP	- Inkatha Freedom Party
IIED	- International Institute for Environment and Development
IOC	- International Olympic Committee
Iscor	- South African Iron and Steel Industry Corporation
IUCN	- International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
IWC	- International Whaling Commission
KNP	- Kruger National Park
KSAT	- Keep South Africa Tidy
MCSA	- Mountain Club of South Africa
MOSS	- Metropolitan Open Spaces System
MPLA	- Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
NCOH	- National Centre for Occupational Health
NEAC	- National Environmental Awareness Campaign
NEPA	- National Environmental Policy Act
NFA	- Native Farmers Association
NFPGA	- Natal Fresh Produce Growers' Association
NGO	- Non-governmental organisation
NGPA	- Natal Game Protection Association
NP	- National Party

NPT	- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NVT	- National Veld Trust
OAU	- Organisation of African Unity
OFS	- Orange Free State
OPEC	- Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAC	- Pan-Africanist Congress
PBE	- Peacock Bay Environmental
PSAC	- President's Scientific Advisory Committee
RBM	- Richards Bay Minerals
Renamo	- Resistência Nacional de Moçambique
RSP	- Regional Seas Programme
SADF	- South African Defence Force
SAGRACOM	- Save the Garden Route Committee
SAICEM	- Southern African International Conference on Environmental Management
SANCCOB	- South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds
SANE	- Society Against Nuclear Energy
SANF	- Southern African Nature Foundation
SANHP	- South African Natural Heritage Programme
SANU	- South African Nature Union
SAR	- South African Railways
SARA	- South African Rivers Association
SARCUSS	- Southern African Regional Commission for the Conservation and Utilisation of the Soil
SASOL	- South African Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation Limited
SPCA	- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SPE	- Society for the Protection of the Environment
SWA	- South West Africa
TGPA	- Transvaal Game Protection Association
UCOR	- Uranium Enrichment Corporation
UCT	- University of Cape Town
UDF	- United Democratic Front
UN	- United Nations

UNCED	- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHE	- United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
UNEP	- United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNITA	- União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola
UNSCCUR	- United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilisation of Resources
UP	- United Party
USA	- United States of America
USSR	- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UTG	- United Tasmania Group
WCS	- World Conservation Strategy
WHO	- World Health Organisation
Wits	- University of the Witwatersrand
WWF	- World Wildlife Fund (from 1988 the World Wide Fund for Nature)
ZAR	- Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek
ZEAL	- Zululand Environmental Alliance

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The environment is a much disputed field of study among human scientists among whom there is a general lack of consensus regarding the terminology that should or should not be employed, the scope of the approaches of various subject disciplines to environmentalism, the nature of the history of environmentalism, and what constitutes environmental philosophy. This introductory chapter serves as theoretical background to the global and South African environmental movements and aims at setting the theoretical parameters of this study. Attention will also be paid to the historiography of environmentalism.

#### 1.1 The term *environmentalism*

There is no single set of terminology acceptable to all within a human sciences approach to environmental studies. Labels such as "shallow green" and "deep green" are often hung round the necks of individuals and interest groups in an attempt to define their level of commitment to the environmental cause. Consensus also lacks in regard to the term that should be employed to describe the highly politicised environmental movement, with two terms, namely *ecologism* and *environmentalism* constantly being played-off against each other in a bid to determine which will reign supreme. It is important to begin by looking at a few definitions of both.

One of the advocates for the use of ecologism to describe the highly politicised environmental movement is the political scientist Andrew Dobson. For him "ecologism holds that a sustainable and fulfilling existence presupposes radical changes in our relationship with the non-human natural world, and in our mode of social and political life".<sup>1</sup> He contrasts ecologism with environmentalism by defining environmentalism as follows: "environmentalism argues for a managerial approach to environmental problems, secure in the belief that they can be solved without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. Dodson, *Green political thought* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Heléne Vollgraaff, a South African political scientist, underlines this perspective when she writes that ecologism should be distinguished from environmentalism in that the former lays the blame for environmental deterioration on the Western socio-economic and political systems. It further rejects the modern Western way of living as based upon individualism and industrialism. It is important to note that Vollgraaff translates the term environmentalism into "omgewingsbewustheid" (environmental awareness) in Afrikaans. Thereby she strips the word of its inherent political potential and moulds it into a perspective in which there can only be one real political ecology, namely ecologism, a perspective in which environmentalism becomes a mere active interest in the environment.<sup>3</sup>

The political scientist Marcel Wissenburg provides a heuristic model to explain the difference between ecologism and environmentalism. According to Wissenburg environmental thought can be divided into a biocentric and an anthropocentric approach. The biocentric approach finds expression on a political philosophical level in deep ecology or ecologism. The anthropocentric approach on the other hand is expressed through shallow ecology or environmentalism. For Wissenburg, deep ecology thus equals ecologism and shallow ecology environmentalism.<sup>4</sup>

From the preceding quotations we can conclude that ecologism (i) is biocentric; (ii) places the blame for environmental degradation on Western socio-economic and political structures; (iii) demands an holistic approach in which the whole becomes greater than the parts thereof; (iv) demands the radical restructuring of socio-economic and political structures; and (v) is radical in nature in that it does not accept managerial approaches to environmental problems. At its core, ecologism is very exclusive and denies recognition of most of what has been done on a political ecology level over the past few decades within the environmental movement.

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<sup>3</sup> H. Vollgraaff, "Ekologisme: 'n alternatiewe lewenswyse" in *Annals of the South African Cultural History Museum* 7(1), November 1995, pp. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> M. Wissenburg, "The idea of nature and the nature of distributive justice" in A. Dobson and P. Lucardie (eds), *The politics of nature: explorations in green political theory*, p. 4.

On the other hand, according to environmental scientist Timothy O'Riordan, environmentalism "is as much a state of being as a mode of conduct or a set of policies. Certainly it can no longer be identified simply with the desire to protect ecosystems or conserve resources - these are merely superficial manifestations of much more deeply rooted values. At its heart environmentalism preaches a philosophy of human conduct that many still find difficult to understand, and those who are aware seemingly find unattainable".<sup>5</sup>

For anthropologist Kay Milton environmentalism is "a quest for a viable future, pursued through the implementation of culturally defined responsibilities. The general nature of these responsibilities distinguishes environmentalism from other such quests; they stem from the recognition that the environment [...] is affected by human activity and that securing a viable future depends on such activity being controlled in some way".<sup>6</sup>

The political scientist John McCormick provides a shorter definition and sees environmentalism as "concern for the environment [...] when elevated into a political pursuit".<sup>7</sup> For John Ferris environmentalism is a synonym for political ecology when he writes that "the term political ecology is used [...] to describe what other authors simply call environmentalism. It is used [...] to distinguish our concerns from those that come under the labels of 'environmental science' and 'environmental studies'. Political ecology can be said to embrace social, scientific and philosophical approaches to environmental problems".<sup>8</sup>

One of the striking features of the term environmentalism is its inclusive nature. The boundaries, as set by the preceding quotations, are the social sciences as a whole, which is also why most academics classify environmentalism as a social movement.<sup>9</sup> As a social movement it is possible for environmentalism to include, *inter alia*,

<sup>5</sup> T. O'Riordan, *Environmentalism* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> K. Milton, "Introduction: environmentalism and anthropology" in K. Milton (ed.), *Environmentalism: the view from anthropology*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> J. McCormick, *The global environmental movement: reclaiming paradise*, p. ix.

<sup>8</sup> J. Ferris, "Introduction" in H. Wiesenenthal (edited by J. Ferris), *Realism in green politics: social movements and ecological reform in Germany*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> See J.J. Müller, "A greener South Africa? Environmentalism, politics and the future" in *Politikon* 24(1), June 1997, pp. 106-109.



politics, philosophy, economics, conservation, preservation, pollution control, deep ecology, shallow ecology and to demand socio-economic and political change in society. Its social scientific nature further demands an holistic approach to environmental problems and allows for various philosophical positions to the extent where one can, like Donald Snow, from the US Conservation Fund, proclaim the environmentalist camp to be the broadest and the most varied of all the perspectives on nature.<sup>10</sup>

The main difference between ecologism and environmentalism is the exclusive nature of the former and the inclusive nature of the latter. For the purpose of this study, the wider term environmentalism is preferred above the narrower ecologism. In accordance with Milton, environmentalism in this study is seen as humankind's quest for a viable future. It rests on the recognition that human activity affects the natural environment and that securing a viable future depends on such activity being controlled in some way. Since different opinions exist on how human activity should be controlled, environmentalism includes both biocentric and anthropocentric world-views, and can argue for managerial or radical approaches to environmental issues.

## **1.2 The scope of an historical approach to environmentalism**

Milton points out that the study of environmentalism means different things to different sciences. Sociology studies it as a social movement, distinguishing between radical and more conservative approaches, and highlighting the social base of environmental concern. Political scientists focus on the political involvement of environmentalists and on green political thought as an ideology. Economists, on the other hand, seek for ways to develop environmental economic models (e.g. environmental audits).<sup>11</sup>

Historians should also stake their claim on the environmentalism pound. Since history, in its traditional form, writes, *inter alia*, about social movements and politics in general, it seems only proper for historians to focus on environmentalism as a

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<sup>10</sup> D. Snow, *Inside the environmental movement: meeting the leadership challenge*, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Milton, p. 6.

social and a political phenomenon in which the playing field can either be at local, national or at international level. It is as much social history as political history that constitutes the historian's preoccupation with the perceived ecological crisis.

It is also important to note that environmentalism goes beyond both conservationism and preservationism. For South African historian Jane Carruthers, conservation is "the managing and utilisation of any resource in such a way as to ensure its perpetuation. It is frequently referred to as 'wise' usage because the aim is to restrict exploitation to a sustainable level and to crop only the excess of the resource".<sup>12</sup> Snow provides an adequate definition of preservation when he writes that it "means the maintenance of a natural living system as nearly as possible in its natural or pristine state so that it can go on doing what it has done on its own for thousands of years".<sup>13</sup>

Whereas the origin of environmentalism can be traced back to conservationist and preservationist efforts in the nineteenth century, environmentalism developed after the 1960s to encompass a wide range of activities of which conservation and preservation are but two. The history of environmentalism should thus not be confined to the history of either conservationism or preservationism or both.

### **1.3 Environmental history versus the history of environmentalism**

This study claims to be a history of environmentalism in South Africa and not an environmental history. Since different opinions exist concerning this labelling, it is necessary to briefly look at what historians understand under "environmental history" and the "history of environmentalism".

According to Carruthers "environmental history concerns man's relationship with the natural environment over time".<sup>14</sup> For Donald Worster it is "history focused on human relations with nature, ecosystems, the land and landscape, the entire biophysical world that surrounds and impinges on human society, from the level of

<sup>12</sup> E.J. Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal 1846 to 1926" in *Archives Year Book for South African History* 58, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Snow, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> E.J. Carruthers, "Towards an environmental history of Southern Africa: some perspectives" in *South African Historical Journal* 23, 1990, p. 184.

invisible micro-organisms to global climate shifts. The field deals with how humans have been trying to reorganise nature as far back as our evidence goes, have been adapting to the forces of nature to varying degrees, and have been regulating their impact to achieve what today we call conservation".<sup>15</sup>

Environmental history for William Beinart and Peter Coates "deals with the various dialogues over time between people and the rest of nature, focusing on reciprocal impacts"<sup>16</sup> and for William Cronon it is "a history which extends its boundaries beyond human institutions - economies, class and gender systems, political organisations, cultural rituals - to the natural ecosystems which provide the context for those institutions. [It] inevitably brings to centre stage a cast of nonhuman characters which usually occupy the margins of historical analysis if they are present in it at all".<sup>17</sup>

Carruthers points out that unlike the United States of America (USA) where environmental history is a well-established discipline with various subdivisions, historians writing on South Africa have largely neglected environmental history.<sup>18</sup> South African environmental historiography has, so far, focused, *inter alia*, on the history of conservation and conservation groups, the role of black people in conservation, the environmental consequences of the trek into and settlement of white people in the interior, the natural environment, pre-colonial societies and more recently on apartheid's environmental toll.<sup>19</sup>

Environmental history in the USA has dealt with a wider range of issues including conservation; preservation; scientific ecology; pre-colonial societies; economic, social, technological and political influences on the natural environment; the environmental impact of the European expansion and colonialism; grasslands

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<sup>15</sup> D. Worster, "Back to nature in Pietermaritzburg" in *South African Historical Journal* 28, 1993, pp. 235-236.

<sup>16</sup> W. Beinart and P. Coates, *Environment and history: the taming of nature in the USA and South Africa*, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> W. Cronon, *Changes in the land: Indians, colonists and the ecology of New England*, p. viii as quoted by Beinart and Coates, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal...", p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Carruthers, "Towards an environmental...", pp. 187-195; F. Khan, "Soil wars: the role of the African National Soil Conservation Association in South Africa, 1953-1959" in *Environmental History* 2(4), 1997, pp. 439, 454 (footnote 1).

ecology; natural disasters; population growth; resources conservation; climate; the evolution of particular environmental problems; biographies of environmental heroes; the urban environment, and to a limited extent on the environmental movement and popular environmentalism.<sup>20</sup>

The focus of environmental history has been as much on the natural environment itself as it has been on the relationship between humans and the environment. The history of the environmental movement and popular environmentalism occupies an uneasy position within American historian Richard White's identification of the different streams of environmental historiography in the USA. The works he cites mainly deal with the roots of environmentalism or with critique of the movement.<sup>21</sup> In doing so he fails to address the fact that environmentalism, unlike the other streams of environmental history, centres on intra-human relations and not on the relationship between humans and nature.

This situation should in part be seen as a result of what appears to be the neglect of authors on the history of environmentalism to define the nature of their field. McCormick, one of the few to venture into an explanation of the nature of the history of environmentalism, sees environmentalism as a global, social, economic and political phenomenon. For him it deals not only with the history of environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS), but also with government environmental policies and legislation, green politics, and international environmental initiatives by the United Nations and other interested parties.<sup>22</sup> O'Riordan provides a shorter explanation when he writes that "the story [history] of environmentalism is the story [history] of people, not of nature".<sup>23</sup>

At the centre of the history of environmentalism is humankind and its interaction on environmental issues. The natural environment merely provides the backdrop against which these intra-human interactions occur. For the purpose of this study, the history

<sup>20</sup> See R. White, "American environmental history: the development of a new historical field" in *Pacific Historical Review* 54(3), 1985, pp. 297-335; A.W. Crosby, "The past and present of environmental history" in *The American Historical Review* 100(4), October 1995, pp. 1177-1189; Beinart and Coates, pp. 1-6.

<sup>21</sup> White, pp. 311-313, 332-333.

<sup>22</sup> McCormick, pp. ix-xi.

<sup>23</sup> T. O'Riordan, *Environmentalism* (1<sup>st</sup> edition), p. 315.

of environmentalism is defined as history that focuses on intra-human interaction on environmental issues over time. It deals, *inter alia*, with governmental response to the perceived ecological crisis, the activities of ENGOs and the development of green political agendas.

#### 1.4 Environmental philosophy

Contemporary environmental philosophy encompasses a wide range of different perspectives. Though it is not the purpose of this study to provide a comprehensive analysis of these different perspectives, it is important to briefly focus on the major positions in environmentalism insofar as they provide an explanation of the underlying world-views that motivate non-governmental and governmental actions where nature is concerned.

The major division in environmentalism is between perspectives that are deep green (deep ecology) and those that are shallow green (shallow ecology). This distinction was first made by the Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess, in a lecture delivered in 1972 which preceded his famous article, "The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement", published in *Inquiry* in 1973. After a latency period lasting until 1980, Naess' distinction became the most popular model to categorise environmental actions.<sup>24</sup>

According to Naess, shallow ecology is an anthropocentric (human-centred) approach in that it views the natural environment as resources available for the use and enjoyment of humans.<sup>25</sup> Within this perspective, humans are seen as being separate from nature and as the source of all value.<sup>26</sup> It further supports the *status quo* in that it seeks to improve the quality of life without proposing radical changes to the dominant socio-political and economic structures in place.<sup>27</sup> Technology occupies a special position within a shallow ecology perspective and is believed to be the main solution

<sup>24</sup> A. Drengson and Y. Inoue, "Introduction" in A. Drengson and Y. Inoue (eds), *The deep ecology movement: an introductory anthology*, pp. xvii-xxi.

<sup>25</sup> B.G. Norton, *Towards unity among environmentalists*, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> C. Theron, "Environmental rights: an overview of interpretations" in *The South African Journal of Environmental Law and Policy* 4(1), March 1997, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> B. Devall, "The deep ecology movement" in *Natural Resources Journal* 20, April 1980, p. 302.

to most of the contemporary environmental problems in the world.<sup>28</sup> In Naess' view, shallow ecology seeks a single objective, namely the health and the affluence of people in the developed world.<sup>29</sup> According to sociologist Bill Devall, the shallow ecology approach is the dominant environmental paradigm and it includes nature conservation, concerns over occupational health and safety, land-use planning, resource conservation, the environmental threat of high demographic growth, animal rights campaigns, and models that propose limits to growth.<sup>30</sup>

Deep ecology, in contrast, is biocentred (nature-centred) and ascribes intrinsic value to both human and non-human life on earth. Within this perspective humans are merely part of an interwoven network of all life and are viewed as equal with and not above or outside the natural environment.<sup>31</sup> Deep ecology sets out to examine the roots of environmental problems and seeks the radical transformation of the socio-political and economic structures of society in order to realise the intrinsic value of all living things.<sup>32</sup> It further holds that the quality of life, both human and non-human, depends on a smaller human population and that appreciating life quality does not imply an increase in the standard of living.<sup>33</sup> A striking feature of deep ecology is its strong spiritual base drawing from diverse ecocentred religions (such as Taoism, Zen Buddhism and the cult surrounding St Francis of Assisi), renewed interest in the traditional religions, philosophies and social organisation of pre-colonial societies (such as the American Indians), and the nature-orientated, monistic philosophy of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677).<sup>34</sup>

Though shallow and deep ecology differ in a number of ways, the essential difference between the two perspectives is that the former supports the continuation of the *status quo* in the management of the natural environment. Deep ecology, on the other hand, demands the radical restructuring of society as a whole to enable humans to judge

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<sup>28</sup> Dobson, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> A. Naess, "The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement: a summary" in Drengson and Inoue (eds), p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Devall, "The deep ecology movement", pp. 300-303.

<sup>31</sup> Theron, p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Devall, "The deep ecology movement", p. 303; Drengson and Inoue, p. xix.

<sup>33</sup> Theron, pp. 42-43.

<sup>34</sup> Devall, pp. 304-307. See S. Blackburn, *The Oxford dictionary of philosophy*, pp. 359-361 for a short discussion of Spinoza's philosophical thought, and B. Devall, *Simple in means, rich in ends: practising deep ecology* for an in-depth discussion of deep ecology.

their actions from the viewpoint of nature, rather than from the position of humankind.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from shallow and deep ecology, contemporary environmental philosophy also includes, *inter alia*, ecofeminism (linking the oppression of nature with the oppression of women in patriarchal societies),<sup>36</sup> bioregionalism (seeking the decentralisation of social and political structures to small, diverse communities that are ecologically sustainable and self-sufficient),<sup>37</sup> social ecology (promoting the decentralisation of social and economic relationships and the altering of the technological approach to nature),<sup>38</sup> and environmental justice (linking environmental issues with social, economic and racial justice, and focusing on the developed/developing world dichotomy in environmental issues).<sup>39</sup>

### 1.5 The historiography of environmentalism

In comparison with the thousands of books written since the 1960s in response to the perceived ecological crisis (amounting mostly to practical guides to saving the environment),<sup>40</sup> little has been written on the history of environmentalism. Scholars and journalists in the USA have led the way in the historiography of national environmentalism (national movements) and have produced literature that deals, *inter alia*, with governmental response to the perceived ecological crisis,<sup>41</sup> mainstream and grassroots ENGO activities,<sup>42</sup> and the roots of environmentalism in the USA.<sup>43</sup> Outside the USA, various works have been published on national and regional

<sup>35</sup> Devall, "The deep ecology movement", p. 303; Theron, p. 43; Wissenburg, p. 5; Norton, p. 66.

<sup>36</sup> See for example J. Evans, "Ecofeminism and the politics of the gendered self" in Dobson and Lucardie (eds), pp. 177-189; J. Plant, "Ecofeminism" in A. Dobson (ed.), *The green reader*, pp. 100-103; W. Venter-Mbabama, "Book review: *Ecofeminism*" in *Bulletin* 4(5), December 1997, pp. 18-19.

<sup>37</sup> Müller, p. 110; K. Sale, "Bioregionalism" in Dobson (ed.), pp. 77-83.

<sup>38</sup> M. Bookchin, "Social ecology" in Dobson (ed.), pp. 59-63.

<sup>39</sup> Müller, pp. 110-111.

<sup>40</sup> See for example P.R. Ehrlich and R.L. Harriman, *How to be a survivor: a plan to save spaceship earth*; M.K. Prokop, *Managing to be green: an environmental primer*.

<sup>41</sup> See for example S.P. Hays, *Beauty, health and permanence: environmental politics in the United States, 1955-1985*; M.K. Landy et al., *The Environmental Protection Agency: asking the wrong questions, from Nixon to Clinton*.

<sup>42</sup> See for example J.M. Petulla, *American environmentalism: values, tactics, priorities*; R. Gottlieb, *Forcing the spring: the transformation of the American environmental movement*; P. Shabecoff, *A fierce green fire: the American environmental movement*; M. Mowrey and T. Redmond, *Not in our backyard: the people and events that shaped America's modern environmental movement*.

<sup>43</sup> See for example C. Pursell (ed.), *From conservation to ecology: the development of environmental concern*; S. Fox, *John Muir and his legacy: the American conservation movement*.

environmentalism,<sup>44</sup> while particular emphasis has been placed on the German party, Die Grünen, in the history of green politics.<sup>45</sup> The history of the global environmental movement has also been addressed by a limited number of scholars.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast, historians of all the schools in South African historiography have largely neglected the history of environmentalism and no account of the history of the modern environmental movement in South Africa has yet been published. South African environmental history, on the other hand, has showed tremendous growth in the past few years and is supported in particular by historians working within the revisionist tradition of South African historiography.<sup>47</sup> Well-known practitioners of South African environmental history include Jane Carruthers, William Beinart and Richard Grove, who have pioneered research into some aspects of nineteenth and early twentieth century environmental history. Carruthers' work mainly deals with the development of protectionist policies, and national parks and game reserves,<sup>48</sup> while Beinart's main concern is with the history of soil conservation measures in South Africa.<sup>49</sup> Grove's research into colonial conservationism in the Cape Colony, on the other hand, provides important and critical accounts of the roots of environmentalism in South Africa.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See for example E. Papadakis, *The green movement in West-Germany*; R.J. Dalton, *The green rainbow: environmental groups in Western Europe*; P. Lowe and J. Goyder, *Environmental groups in politics* (for an account of the British environmental movement).

<sup>45</sup> See for example F. Müller-Rommel, "Ecology parties in Western Europe" in *West European Politics* 5(1), January 1982, pp. 68-74; J.L. Cohen and A. Arato, "The German Green Party: a movement between fundamentalism and modernism" in *Dissent* 31(3), Summer 1984, pp. 327-332; H. Wiesenhal (edited by J. Ferris), *Realism in green politics: social movements and ecological reform in Germany*.

<sup>46</sup> See for example L.K. Caldwell, *International environmental policy: emergence and dimensions*; M. Nicholson, *The new environmental age*; J. McCormick, *The global environmental movement: reclaiming paradise*.

<sup>47</sup> Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal...", pp. 2-3; Carruthers, "Towards an environmental...", pp. 188-189, 192.

<sup>48</sup> See for example E.J. Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal 1846 to 1926" in *Archives Year Book for South African History* 58, 1995; E.J. Carruthers, "The Pongola Game Reserve: an eco-political study" in *Koedoe* 28, 1985, pp. 1-16.

<sup>49</sup> See for example W. Beinart, "Soil erosion, conservationism and ideas about development: a Southern African exploration, 1900-1960" in *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11(1), October 1984, pp. 52-83; W. Beinart, "Introduction: the politics of colonial conservation" in *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15(2), January 1989, pp. 143-162.

<sup>50</sup> See for example R. Grove, "Early themes in African conservation: the Cape in the nineteenth century" in D. Anderson and R. Grove (eds), *Conservation in Africa: people, policies and practice*, pp. 21-39; R. Grove, "Scotland in South Africa: John Croumbie Brown and the roots of settler environmentalism" in T. Griffiths and L. Robin (eds), *Ecology and empire: environmental history of settler societies*, pp. 139-153.



Unfortunately environmental historians have not yet ventured beyond their nature and resource conservation agendas to address the environmentalist agenda that emerged in South Africa from the mid-1960s onwards. William Beinart and Peter Coates could have been the exception with their comparative study, *Environment and history: the taming of nature in the USA and South Africa*. In their final chapter, entitled "From conservation to environmentalism and beyond",<sup>51</sup> they give a brief account of the environmental revolution in the USA, but fail to focus on events that occurred in South Africa in the same period. Instead, they take the reader back to the first black ENGO, the Native Farmers Association which was founded in 1918 (see section 3.2 in this study), before providing a brief comparative account of the environmental marginalisation of black people in South Africa and black and Indian people in the USA.

By neglecting the history of environmentalism, historians left a very topical and relevant historical field open for exploration by disciplines with limited built-in historical dimensions. Concerning the development of governmental environmental policy, legislation and administration, the main sources are still those written by natural scientists,<sup>52</sup> public administrators<sup>53</sup> and environmental lawyers<sup>54</sup> in which historical development is not the main concern, but rather the introduction to the issue/policy/legislation under discussion.

The environmental toll of the government's domestic policy of apartheid<sup>55</sup> and the corresponding environmental marginalisation and negative environmental attitudes of people of colour in the country have further been explored by non-historians. Though their work provides valuable historical information, it is in particular in Alan Durning's work (the most comprehensive account of apartheid's environmental toll to

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<sup>51</sup> Beinart and Coates, pp. 93-114.

<sup>52</sup> See for example A.C. Brown (ed.), *The history of scientific endeavour in South Africa*; R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental concerns in South Africa: technical and legal perspectives*; R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental management in South Africa*.

<sup>53</sup> See for example G.F. Barkhuizen, *Die administrasie van omgewingsbewaring in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika* (D.Admin. thesis).

<sup>54</sup> See especially the detailed and historically-rich works by André Rabie such as M.A. Rabie, "Wildlife conservation and the law" in *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 6(2), July 1973, pp. 145-198, and M.A. Rabie, *South African environmental legislation*.

<sup>55</sup> M. Rosenblum and D. Williamson, *Squandering Eden: Africa at the edge*; L. Timberlake, *Africa in crisis: the causes, the cures of environmental bankruptcy*; A. Durning, *Apartheid's environmental toll* (Worldwatch paper 95).

date), at times difficult to distinguish between historical fact and anti-apartheid rhetoric. Historical geographer Farieda Khan, on the other hand, has done pioneering work into the historical roots of contemporary black attitudes towards the natural environment.<sup>56</sup> Attention has also been paid to the environmental track record of the South African National Defence Force<sup>57</sup> and on the history of the development of and opposition to the nuclear industry in South Africa.<sup>58</sup> Though, once again, their work provides valuable information, it is important to take into account that the authors are normally not impartial and tend to have strong links either with the government<sup>59</sup> or with ENGOs that support massive reductions in defence budgets<sup>60</sup> or the dismantling of the nuclear industry.<sup>61</sup>

Non-historians have also explored the history of non-governmental environmental activities between 1972 and 1992. Limited literature has been published on ENGO activities prior to 1988,<sup>62</sup> the most informative source being a M.Sc dissertation by C.D. Schweizer.<sup>63</sup> The strength of the dissertation lies in the fact that it provides a comprehensive list of past and existing ENGOs in South Africa (the first of its kind). Unfortunately, the scope of her work is restricted to the focus areas and organisational structures of ENGOs, which in turn means that it provides only a brief historical account of ENGO activities up to 1982. Schweizer's dissertation was followed in 1990 by the publication of an environmental networking and resource directory for

<sup>56</sup> See for example Khan's M.A. dissertation, *Contemporary South African environmental response: an historical and socio-political evaluation with particular reference to blacks*.

<sup>57</sup> The most detailed account is to be found in J. Cock and P. Mckenzie (eds), *From defence to development: redirecting military resources in South Africa*. For a personal and emotional account of the environmental impact of the South African war effort in Angola and Namibia, see J. Breytenbach, *Eden's exiles: one soldier's fight for paradise*.

<sup>58</sup> See for example D. Fig, "Apartheid's nuclear arsenal: deviation from development" in Cock and Mckenzie (eds), pp. 163-180; W. Stumpf, "The birth and death of the South African nuclear weapons programme" (paper read at the Unione Scienziati per il Disarmo conference, "50 Years after Hiroshima", Castiglione, 28.9.1995-2.10.1995), <<http://www.aec.co.za/strategy.htm>>, 1995.

<sup>59</sup> Stumpf is the chief executive of the government controlled Atomic Energy Corporation.

<sup>60</sup> Both Cock and Mckenzie have strong ties with the Group for Environmental Monitoring.

<sup>61</sup> Fig was an active member of Koeberg Alert that campaigned for the dismantling of the South African nuclear industry.

<sup>62</sup> See for example J.A. Pringle, *The conservationists and the killers: the story of game protection and the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa*; Council for the Habitat, *Activities in retrospect: conference proceedings 4. Johannesburg, 9.5.1978*.

<sup>63</sup> C.D. Schweizer, *Environmental and related interest groups in South Africa* 1-2.

Southern Africa, which has been extremely helpful in the identification of the plethora of new ENGOs that emerged in South Africa between 1988 and 1992.<sup>64</sup>

The emergence of new environmentalism in South Africa from 1988 onwards and the grievances and activities of its role-players have received a lot of attention from non-historians in the past decade. Numerous articles,<sup>65</sup> books<sup>66</sup> and a thesis<sup>67</sup> have been written on the new environmental movement, whose authors, with few exceptions, have mostly played an active role in this movement. Their active participation, coupled with the politicised environmental agenda of new environmentalism, in turn resulted in biased accounts of the history of the major environmental campaigns between 1988 and 1992. The lack of interest by historians in the history of new environmentalism has led to the situation where environmental activists have set the parameters of new environmentalist history in South Africa. To alter these parameters will have to be a priority with historians interested in the history of South African environmentalism. This study will attempt to redefine the parameters of the history of the modern environmental movement in South Africa between 1972 and 1992.

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Within the theoretical confinements set out in this chapter, this study will proceed to address the history of environmentalism as history that focuses on intra-human interaction on environmental issues over time. Attention will first be paid to the global environmental movement that provides the background against which the history of environmentalism in South Africa between 1972 and 1992 should be projected.

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<sup>64</sup> *The Green Pages; The Green Pages 1991/1992: environmental networking and resource directory for Southern Africa; The Green Pages: environmental and development networking directory for Southern Africa.*

<sup>65</sup> See for example J. Cock, "Ozone-friendly politics" in *Work in Progress* 66, May 1990, pp. 29-33; C. Cooper, "People, the environment and change" in *South African Institute of Race Relations Spotlight* 5/94, October 1994, pp. 1-76; J.J. Müller, "A greener South Africa? Environmentalism, politics and the future" in *Politikon* 24(1), June 1977, pp. 106-119.

<sup>66</sup> See for example E. Koch, D. Cooper and H. Coetzee, *Water, waste and wildlife: the politics of ecology in South Africa*; J. Cock and E. Koch (eds), *Going green: people, politics and the environment in South Africa*; D. Hallows (ed.), *Hidden faces. Environment, development, justice: South Africa and the global context.*

<sup>67</sup> H. Vollgraaff, *Die aard en omvang van omgewings- en groenpolitiek in Suid-Afrika met spesiale verwysing na die rol van belangegroepe in die Wes-Kaap* (M.A. thesis).

## CHAPTER 2

### GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTALISM, 1972-1992

Modern preoccupation with the environment is a global phenomenon and, as such, global environmentalism provides the background against which national environmental movements should be viewed. In order to place South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992 in the correct international context, it is important to briefly focus on the developments in the global environmental movement that occurred in the same period.

Concern with the environment is not a recent phenomenon. In the third century BC Erasthenes laid the blame for the deforestation of Cyprus on governmental land policy, navigational needs and mining. In the second century BC, the philosopher Plato blamed the erosion in Attica on deforestation.<sup>1</sup> Urbanisation and the resulting air pollution, a few centuries later, caused John Evelyn to write his now famous tract, *Fumifugium: the inconveniencie of the aer and smoak of London dissipated*, in 1661. Evelyn proposed to King Charles II of England and his parliament that trees be planted around London to freshen its polluted air.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate roots of modern environmentalism<sup>3</sup> can be traced back to the conservation movement of the nineteenth century that focused mainly on threats to particular areas or species.<sup>4</sup> Included in the conservation agenda was concern with high air pollution levels, a direct result of the Industrial Revolution, which led to the passing of the first broad-ranging air pollution legislation in the world by the British parliament in 1863. The conservation movement was particularly concerned with the conservation of the natural environment and the world's first environmental interest group to work towards this goal, the Commons, Footpaths and Open Spaces Preservation Society, was founded in Britain in 1865. In 1872, the world's first national park, the Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming in the United States of America (USA), was proclaimed, while the first international agreement on the

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<sup>1</sup> M.A.L. Miller, *The Third World in global environmental politics*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> R.E. Goodin, *Green political theory*, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Also referred to as new environmentalism, new wave environmentalism, second wave environmentalism and the modern environmental movement.

<sup>4</sup> B.G. Norton, *Towards unity among environmentalists*, p. 62.

environment, dealing with salmon quotas in the Rhine River, was signed between Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg in 1886.<sup>5</sup>

There was a general consensus in the conservation movement regarding the need to protect particular areas and fauna and flora species. However, opinions differed on how these areas and species should be protected, which resulted in a split within the conservation movement that divided it into conservationists and preservationists. The conservationists, led by Gifford Pinchott, argued for the wise usage of natural resources, while the preservationists, led by John Muir, promoted the maintenance of ecosystems with little or no human interference.<sup>6</sup>

A few years after its creation in 1945, the United Nations (UN) hosted the first international environmental conference. The United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilisation of Resources (UNSCCUR) was convened in the USA in 1949 to address the problem of nature protection, primarily from an economic perspective. UNSCCUR's 500 odd delegates were mainly natural scientists who viewed the natural environment as an infinite resource that could be utilised as humankind saw fit. As a result, they saw the main task of the conference as providing an international forum where scientists could share information on techniques for the conservation and utilisation of resources.<sup>7</sup>

The conservation agenda dominated environmental concern in the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1960s, however, the movement proved unable to address the multitude of environmental problems such as water and air pollution, the proliferation of chemical waste, the possible threats of nuclear weapons and the widespread use of pesticides. These environmental problems differed from the conservation movement's

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<sup>5</sup> J. McCormick, *The global environmental movement: reclaiming paradise*, pp. viii-ix, 12; J. Wiley, *Suid-Afrika se rol en betrokkenheid by internasionale omgewingsbewing* (C.R. Swart Lecture 19, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, 5.9.1986), pp. 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> G. McConnell, "The environmental movement: ambiguities and meanings" in *Natural Resources Journal* 11, 1971, pp. 428-429; G.T. Miller, *Living in the environment: principles, connections and solutions* (9<sup>th</sup> edition), pp. 37-38.

<sup>7</sup> M.A.L. Miller, p. 5.

concern for particular areas and species in that it affected the amenities and quality of life of humans around the globe.<sup>8</sup>

Together with the emergence of new environmental problems, the 1960s also saw the development of grassroots protest movements in the USA and Western Europe which led to a new social consciousness in which the tendency was to criticise and question the *status quo*. Environmentalism developed alongside the "anti"-movements of the sixties (e.g. Civil Rights movement, anti-Vietnam, anti-nuclear, etc.), fuelled in particular by the youthful counterculture of the hippies and their anti-nuclear, anti-war and pro-peace campaigns.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.1 The environmental revolution, 1962-1972

The publication of the book *Silent spring* by the career biologist Rachel Carson in 1962, is hailed by many as the beginning of global environmentalism. In *Silent spring*, Carson focused the attention on the environmental problems caused by the use of pesticides. Her central concern was with the way dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT)<sup>10</sup> and other pesticides impeded the reproductive cycle of bird life. On a more general level, *Silent spring* also illustrated how human activity influences the natural environment, and how this influence could turn out to be poisonous for humans as well.<sup>11</sup>

*Silent spring* was an immediate best seller with the general public and sold more than 100 000 copies in the first three months. While her book was embraced by the general public, the US Department of Agriculture and the chemical industry viewed it as a threat and mounted a \$250 000 campaign against Carson to discredit her.<sup>12</sup> In August 1962 Pres. J.F. Kennedy requested his scientific advisor to study the pesticide issue. In May 1963 the President's Scientific Advisory Committee (PSAC) released its

<sup>8</sup> Norton, p. 62; S.P. Hays, "Three decades of environmental politics: the historical context" in M.J. Lacey (ed.), *Government and environmental politics: essays on historical developments since World War Two*, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Norton, p. 62; W. Beinart and P. Coates, *Environment and history: the taming of nature in the USA and South Africa*, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> DDT was first discovered in 1939. It was cheap and easy to make. The initial effectiveness as a pesticide led to its widespread use before its effect on the natural environment was properly tested.

<sup>11</sup> McCormick, p. 55; Goodin, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> G.T. Miller, p. 43.

report in which it took a critical stance against the pesticide industry and the federal government. The PSAC agreed with Carson on the harmful nature of pesticides in general, and DDT in particular, and thereby firmly established that a problem existed. *Silent spring* sparked off a wide public debate over the use of pesticides and directly led to changes in local and national governmental policy in the USA and several Western European countries.<sup>13</sup> These changes did not filter down to South Africa, and the use of pesticides, including DDT, remained unchecked until the mid 1980s (see section 5.5.1).

Beinart and Coates point out that the enthusiastic reception of *Silent spring* should in part be seen against the background of the discussions in the 1950s regarding the harmful effects of nuclear fall-out. By 1972 a biologist, Barry Commoner, had already traced isotopes from nuclear surface tests conducted in the Nevada Dessert (USA) in the 1950s, via grass and cow's milk, into the teeth of human babies where they resurfaced as high concentrations of radioactive strontium-90. DDT found in fatty tissues of Antarctic penguins and in other animals such as the cahow bird (found mainly around the Bermuda Islands) did their part in convincing the general public that they had to start reconsidering the industries around which they built their national economies and ultimately their lives.<sup>14</sup>

Carson's *Silent spring* stimulated the publication of other environment-orientated books, both in the USA and in Western Europe: Stuart Udall, *The quiet crisis* (1963); Jean Dorst, *Avant que nature meure* (Before nature dies, 1965); Rolf Edberg, *Spillran av ett moln* (On the shred of a cloud, 1966); Paul Ehrlich, *The population bomb* (1968); as well as two books by Barry Commoner, *Science and survival* (1966) and the famous *The closing circle* (1972), to name only a few.<sup>15</sup> Environmental models were further developed by the Club of Rome and the British magazine, the *Ecologist*, respectively entitled *Limits to growth* (1972) and *Blueprint for survival* (1972), in which the authors predicted the breakdown of society if the pollution, demographic and industrial trends were allowed to persist.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> McCormick, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup> Beinart and Coates, pp. 95-96; F.A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the death of man: the Christian view of ecology*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> R.J. Dalton, *The green rainbow: environmental groups in Western Europe*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>16</sup> McCormick, pp. 74-79.

Most of these authors drew public attention to three key issues, namely pollution, population growth<sup>17</sup> and technology. Their books were alarmist in nature and the more pessimistic among them quickly earned titles such as "the prophets of doom".<sup>18</sup> The influence of these "prophets of doom" on the minds of the general public in the 1960s and 1970s should not be downplayed. Words like "if we are to survive" brought visions of the end of the world into people's homes. Various religions, notably Christianity, Judaism and Islam had for centuries preached that the world would someday come to an end because of a Higher Being. The public was now confronted with a real possibility of the world coming to an end due to human actions alone. The Cold War tensions and the mere thought of a possible nuclear war that would bring life as we know it on earth to an end within minutes, did not help.

Public awareness was further heightened by a few environmental disasters in the 1960s that seemed to prove the "prophets of doom" correct. One of the first disasters was the collapse of a pit-heap above Aberfan, a village in South Wales in October 1966. This tragedy resulted in the deaths of 144 people, 116 of whom were children attending the local school at the time of the disaster.<sup>19</sup> In 1967 the oiltanker, *Torrey Canyon*, ran aground in the English Channel, polluting hundreds of kilometres of Cornish coastline with about 875 000 barrels of crude oil.<sup>20</sup> To make matters worse, the British government authorised the use of untested detergents to break down the oil. Not only were these detergents ineffective, but they also caused further biological damage, and in the end the Royal Air Force had to be called in to set the spilled oil alight with bombs.<sup>21</sup>

Two years later, toxins leaking into the Rhine River, the main source of drinking water for millions of Europeans, killed tons of fish, leaving rotting, poisoned fish along the banks of the river. In the same year a massive blow-out of an oil platform

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<sup>17</sup> It was common practice to refer to the population growth in terms of the population explosion. The main reason for this was the relative short period it took the world's population to grow from 2 to 3 billion. The first billion was achieved in about 1850; eighty years later in 1930 the second billion mark was passed and only 30 years later it moved up to 3 billion. P.M. Hauser, "On population and environment: policy and problems" in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 36(22), 1.9.1970, pp. 696-697.

<sup>18</sup> McCormick, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> One barrel equals 159 litres of crude oil. Dalton, p. 36; M.A.L. Miller, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> McCormick, p. 57.



off Santa Barbara polluted kilometres of Californian coastline.<sup>22</sup> In 1969 the oil-polluted Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio, caught fire and burned for eight days. By the late 1960s, Lake Erie, a huge inland sea in the northern parts of the USA, had become so polluted with the industrial discharges from places such as Buffalo, Detroit and Toledo that millions of fish died and most of its beaches had to be closed.<sup>23</sup>

While the natural disasters and the academic debate heightened the general public's environmental awareness, the student movement of the late 1960s created a new generation of young political activists who, according to Dalton, provided a leadership cadre and an activist core for many of the newly formed environmental groups. The roots of the modern French environmental movement are mostly traced back to the May Revolts of 1968. The revolts gave French environmentalism an ideological base by linking environmental degradation to the unbridled economic growth in France and to the overcentralised French state.<sup>24</sup>

In the Netherlands the environmental movement originated from the Prove (1965-1967) and the Kabouter (1968-1970) movements. Similarly, the student movements and protests of the late 1960s are credited for the beginning of the environmental movements in both West Germany and Denmark. Youth protesters in Belgium, aiming mainly at regional decentralisation and democratisation, also gradually started to incorporate environmental issues in their demands. In the Flemish part of Belgium, environmentalism developed out of a charismatic Catholic movement, Anders Gaan Leven. This movement rejected the industrial society in favour of a simple lifestyle.<sup>25</sup>

The growing public concern for the environment, and also for human health risks brought about by industrial growth in the sixties, resulted in Earth Day on 22 April 1970. The first Earth Day was an American invention and was mainly confined to the USA.<sup>26</sup> It was the brainchild of Wisconsin senator Gaylord Nelson, who proposed at a symposium in September 1969 that a "National Teach-in on the crisis of the

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<sup>22</sup> Dalton, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> B. Commoner, *The closing circle: confronting the environmental crisis*, pp. 94-95; G.T. Miller, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Dalton, pp. 36-37.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> M. Allaby, *The eco-activists: youth fighters for a human environment*, pp. 50-51.

environment" should be held. For Nelson, the environmental crisis was the most critical crisis facing humankind and all other major problems of the day, including Vietnam, nuclear war, hunger and decaying cities, were relatively insignificant by comparison.<sup>27</sup>

Earth Day started to take on a momentum of its own during the organising process and on 22 April 1970 the largest environmental demonstration in history took place, e.g. rallies and teach-ins were held at an estimated 1 500 colleges and schools in the USA; both houses of the US Congress went into recess to show support; cars were banned from New York's Fifth Avenue for two hours and the avenue was filled by an estimated one million demonstrators. The nation-wide number of participants was estimated to be as high as ten million.<sup>28</sup> According to Mark Dowie, Earth Day 1970 should be seen as the culmination point of the environmental craze of the sixties.<sup>29</sup>

While public concern with the perceived environmental crisis reached its height in the USA with Earth Day in 1970, the UN was slowly developing mechanisms to ensure the environment a permanent place on the international political agenda, the most important of which was the convening of the historic United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in June 1972.

## 2.2 The Stockholm Conference (1972)

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) was preceded in 1968 by the Intergovernmental Conference of Experts on the Scientific Basis for Rational Use and Conservation of the Resources of the Biosphere (the Biosphere Conference), which was held in Paris. The latter conference explored the theme of international co-operation in ecological research that had first been voiced at UNSCCUR back in 1949, and focused on the scientific aspects of environmental problems. It further addressed human impact on the biosphere, including the effects of

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<sup>27</sup> R. Gottlieb, *Forcing the spring: the transformation of the American environmental movement*, pp. 105-106. From Nelson's statement it is quite clear that he does not grasp the full meaning of the evolving environmental crisis. Hunger and decaying cities are inherent parts of the environmental crisis, while war and the threat of war contribute to it.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112; McCormick, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> M. Dowie, *Losing ground: American environmentalism at the close of the twentieth century*, pp. 3, 24. See also Gottlieb, p. 113.

air and water pollution, overgrazing, deforestation and the drainage of wetlands. The conference did not share in the optimism UNSCCUR showed in 1949, and the delegates emphasised that environmental deterioration had reached a critical phase. This implied that the world at large had to reconsider its strategies for economic development. An important aspect of the Biosphere Conference was the fact that delegates emphasised the interdependence of the environment. They concluded that the deterioration of the environment was the fault of rapid population growth, urbanisation and industrialisation.<sup>30</sup>

In the same year as the Biosphere Conference, the UN General Assembly decided to convene UNCHE. The General Assembly further accepted the invitation of the Swedish government to hold the planned conference in Stockholm in June 1972. The theme of UNCHE was "Only one earth". It was specifically chosen to emphasise the interdependence of the whole ecosystem in general, and specifically that earth was all that humankind had and that there was nowhere else to go when man completed his environmental destruction.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike the Biosphere Conference, which brought together leading scientists, UNCHE was aimed at bringing together the leading statesmen of the day. Together, the scientists and the politicians had to define the basic environmental issues and recommend a course of action, to protect and improve the human environment, that would satisfy both developed as well as developing countries.<sup>32</sup> Whilst the Biosphere Conference sought to find scientific solutions to environmental problems, UNCHE, on the other hand, looked at the broader political, social and economic issues at stake.<sup>33</sup>

The proposal of an international environmental conference was received with mixed feelings. Among the developed states there was a general need for UNCHE, mainly because environmental deterioration was most evident in their countries. The developing states, on the other hand, were overwhelmingly antagonistic towards the

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<sup>30</sup> McCormick, pp. 88-90.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, *Human settlements: the environmental challenge*, p. xiii; "United Nations Conference on the Human Environment" in *UN Monthly Chronicle* 9(7), July 1972, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations, *Human settlements...*, p. xi.

<sup>33</sup> M.A.L. Miller, p. 7.

proposed conference. They saw environmental problems as being a result of industrialisation and thus confined to the developed states. They further believed that the developed states would use UNCHE as an excuse to prevent industrial growth in the developing world and thereby keep the latter under control of the developed world.<sup>34</sup>

The developing world made sure, through their voting power in the UN, that their concerns received due attention. The Secretary-General of UNCHE, Maurice Strong, is credited with ensuring that the developing world not only attended UNCHE in 1972, but also actively participated in organising the conference. Delegates from sixteen developing countries served on the 27-member Preparatory Committee that was set up to organise UNCHE.<sup>35</sup>

An important step by UNCHE's secretariat to address the fears of the developing world, was the convening of the Panel of Experts on Development and Environment, which met at Founex, Switzerland (4-12 June 1971). The aim of the Founex meeting was to address the protection and improvement of the environment within the context of the need for developing countries to develop.<sup>36</sup> The Founex Report made the position of the developing countries very clear in that it attributed the concern about environmental issues to the problems experienced by the developed world. However, the report acknowledged the need for the developing world to learn from the mistakes made by the developed world, thus enabling the developing world to avoid the "mistakes and distortions that characterised the patterns of development in the industrialised societies".<sup>37</sup> The report identified poverty and lack of basic necessities like housing and sanitation facilities as the major environmental problems of the developing world. The Founex Report became the focus of discussion at a number of

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<sup>34</sup> W. Rowland, *The plot to save the world: the life and times of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment*, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> The remaining positions were filled by eight developed states and three Eastern European states. United Nations, "Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972", <[gopher://unepq.unep.org/00/un/unep/govcoun/decision/1972stoc/gc1972.txt](http://gopher://unepq.unep.org/00/un/unep/govcoun/decision/1972stoc/gc1972.txt)>, 1973, par. 5. Since computers are set up differently the page numbers of sources consulted on Gopher will vary considerably. Instead of page numbers, the paragraph numbers will be cited when referring to the background to UNCHE and the actual proceedings. The documents and resolutions of UNCHE, on the other hand, will be cited according to their official titles and/or headings in the report.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 9; Rowland, p. 48.

<sup>37</sup> The Founex Report, quoted in Rowland, p. 49.

regional seminars on development and environment, convened under the auspices of the UN, and was, according to Wade Rowland, one of the most important documents of UNCHE.<sup>38</sup>

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden, from 5 to 16 June 1972. Representatives from 114 countries (including South Africa),<sup>39</sup> nineteen intergovernmental agencies and 400 other intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) attended UNCHE. Notable absentees included all but Romania from the East European countries. The communist bloc boycotted the conference because of an argument with the organisers over the voting status of the German Democratic Republic.<sup>40</sup>

The organisers of UNCHE divided the proceedings into two parts: the official part, which consisted of official governmental representatives and officials from UN and intergovernmental agencies and organisations, was held in Stockholm's Folkets Hus. The other part was the Environmental Forum (the Miljöforum), set up by the Swedish government in another part of Stockholm. The Environmental Forum consisted mainly of representatives from national and international environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) and they were not allowed to participate in the official proceedings. They were kept informed by the daily conference publication, *Stockholm Conference Eco*, published jointly by *The Ecologist* and Friends of the Earth (USA). Although the ENGOS were not officially involved, UNCHE provided a forum at which the international grassroots environmentalists forged relationships with each other that would last for years to come.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The seminars included the Economic Commission for Africa (Addis Ababa, 23-28 August 1971), the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (Bangkok, 17-22 August 1971), the Economic Commission for Latin America (Mexico City, 6-11 September 1971) and the Economic and Social Office in Beirut (Beirut, 27 September-2 October 1971). United Nations, "Report of the United Nations...", par. 9; Rowland, pp. 48-49.

<sup>39</sup> The official UN report on UNCHE states that 113 countries attended the conference and then proceed to list 114 that participated. United Nations, "Report of the United Nations...", par. 13.

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed discussion regarding the voting status of the German Democratic Republic, see Rowland, pp. 89-94. An interesting absentee was the USA Ambassador to the UN, George Bush. M. Mowrey and T. Redmond, *Not in our backyard: the people and events that shaped America's modern environmental movement*, p. 83.

<sup>41</sup> "United Nations Conference on the Human Environment", p. 52; Mowrey and Redmond, pp. 82-83.

UNCHE focused on six main areas: educational and social aspects of environmental issues; human settlements; development and environment; natural resources management; pollution, and international organisational matters.<sup>42</sup> Major elements of the debate were the differences between developed and developing nations over economic relations and environmental policies. The developing nations were particularly concerned that developed nations would place trade restrictions on goods imported from developing countries that failed to meet the environmental protection standard of the importing country.<sup>43</sup> The developing countries were also quick to identify apartheid, racial and colonial oppression as the "very core of environmental problems in Africa due to the degradation they cause to human resources by taking away rights of many and thereby bringing benefits to only a minority".<sup>44</sup>

UNCHE produced a Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and an Action Plan for the Human Environment. The Declaration emphasised humankind's dependency on nature for its existence as well as its power to transform the environment on an unprecedented scale. It also acknowledged the right of developing countries to develop by ascribing most of their environmental problems to underdevelopment. The Declaration also included a list of 26 principles. Principle 1 proclaimed the right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions for life for the whole of humankind, and condemned "policies promoting or perpetuating apartheid, racial segregation, discrimination, colonial and other forms of oppression and foreign domination".<sup>45</sup> The inclusion of this principle infuriated the South African delegation who viewed it as interference in their domestic affairs (see section 4.1). The other principles dealt, *inter alia*, with the conservation of natural resources, the safeguarding and sharing of non-renewable resources, environmental considerations in development, international co-operation to improve the environment, and stated that science, technology, education and research should be used to promote environmental protection.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> "United Nations Conference on the Human Environment", p. 52.

<sup>43</sup> Rowland, pp. 53-58.

<sup>44</sup> Dr W.K. Chagul, Tanzania's Minister of Economic Affairs and Development Planning, as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, "Report of the United Nations...", Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, principle 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, principles 2-26.

The Action Plan for the Human Environment had two main objectives: firstly, to propose a set of internationally (UN) co-ordinated activities to increase the knowledge of environmental problems and their effects on both humankind and the natural environment. Secondly, it aimed to protect and improve the quality of the environment and the productivity of resources through integrated environmental planning and management.<sup>47</sup> To accomplish these tasks, the Action Plan made 109 separate recommendations which were grouped into four sections, namely, planning and management of human settlement for environmental quality; identification and control of pollutants of broad international significance; educational, informational, social and cultural aspects of environmental issues, and development and the environment.<sup>48</sup>

UNCHE recommended that the UN designate 5 June as World Environment Day, on which day the UN and governments world-wide would undertake activities to reaffirm their concern for the environment. UNCHE also condemned nuclear weapons tests and called upon those states intending to carry out nuclear weapons tests to abandon their plans, since these tests might lead to further contamination of the environment. In the light of the success of UNCHE, the delegates recommended that the UN convene a second international conference on the human environment.<sup>49</sup>

UNCHE firmly established environmental concerns as international social, economic and political issues. According to Russel Dalton, it legitimised environmental policy as a universal concern among nations, and so created a place for environmental issues on many national political agendas where they were previously unrecognised.<sup>50</sup> UNCHE did not place the environment on the national political agenda in South Africa. At most, the conference brought home the uncoordinated nature of the national environmental management system to the South African government (see section 4.1).

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<sup>47</sup> McCormick, p. 104.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations, "Report of the United Nations...", Action plan for the human environment, recommendations 1-109.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 4: Other resolutions adopted at the conference.

<sup>50</sup> Dalton, pp. 37-38.

### 2.3 The United Nations Environment Programme

One of the most important outcomes of UNCHE was the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to address the issues put forward by the Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan. UN General Assembly resolution 2997 of 15 December 1972 opted not to create a new specialised agency, but rather UNEP which would be a crosscutting programme of policy co-ordination. The developing countries campaigned very hard to have UNEP's headquarters set up in the developing world, mainly because the headquarters of every existing UN specializing agency was either in North America or in Europe. Despite the objections of the developed countries, UNEP's secretariat was set up in Nairobi, Kenya. Liaison offices were set up in New York and Geneva, and regional offices in Bangkok, Beirut, Mexico City and Nairobi.<sup>51</sup>

UNEP consisted of four parts: a small Environmental Secretariat that would be responsible for the day-to-day work of the UN in the environmental field and that would serve as a focal point for UN environmental actions and co-ordination; a 54-member Governing Council for Environmental Programmes that would form the central intergovernmental organ for international co-operation on environmental issues; an Environmental Fund to which governments would contribute on a voluntary basis, and an Environment Co-ordination Board responsible for general co-ordination of the work of the UN agencies in regard to the environment. The Environmental Fund had to pay for all or part of the cost of new environmental activities undertaken by the UN and related agencies. The target of \$100 million was set for the first five years. Other existing UN specialised agencies already involved in environmental issues were left to pursue their own tasks. UNEP had no direct influence over them and could only exercise leadership without imposing any directives on other UN agencies or governments.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> McCormick, p. 106.

<sup>52</sup> "United Nations Conference on the Human Environment", p. 53.



The blueprint for UNEP was the Action Plan for the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm, that had three basic components: the global environmental assessment programme, the environmental management activities and the supporting measures. The most ambitious of these was the global assessment programme that came to be known as Earthwatch. It was given four main functions, namely those of evaluation and review (identification of environmental concerns of major international significance), research (into nearly every area of environmental concern), monitoring (to provide some of the basic data needed by the various governments to do research) and information exchange (through the International Referral Service for Sources of Environmental Information).<sup>53</sup>

The main idea behind Earthwatch was to establish and maintain a system that would continually monitor the lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere throughout the world. Internationally based research and information exchange programmes would support this system. Earthwatch would collect data from around the world; this data was then to be fed into a computer network (at the UN computer complex in Geneva), interpreted, and the results thereof made available to the international community to formulate rational environmental policy.<sup>54</sup>

The effectiveness of Earthwatch has been questioned throughout its existence. Truth is that from the start Earthwatch lacked the proper financial resources and most of its budget went towards individual projects rather than Earthwatch itself. Many of the functions entrusted to Earthwatch were already being undertaken by more than 30 private, intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies, like the International Council of Scientific Unions' Global Atmospheric Research Programme and the International Oceanographic Commission's Global Investigation of Pollution in the Marine Environment.<sup>55</sup>

The environmental management component of UNEP was dependent on the information Earthwatch had to gather. The aim was to develop a comprehensive

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<sup>53</sup> United Nations, "Report of the United Nations...", Action plan for the human environment, Section C.

<sup>54</sup> Rowland, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

structure that would be able to support the protection of the environment. International conventions that would *inter alia* preserve biodiversity and genetic resources formed the basis of the environmental management undertaken by UNEP. The collaboration between UNEP and other organisations led to a number of international conventions, notably the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, Washington, 1973), the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona, 1976) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn, 1979).<sup>56</sup>

The supporting task of UNEP included education, public information, financial assistance and personnel training. In 1975 UNEP collaborated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to establish the UNEP/UNESCO Environmental Education Programme. Their co-operation resulted in the organising of the UNEP/UNESCO Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Education held in Tbilisi in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1977. Despite its efforts, environmental education remained a national issue and ENGOs in individual countries played a much greater role than UNEP could. It was successful in setting up a publishing house, Earthscan, within the International Institute for Environment and Development in 1975. After producing a substantial amount of literature, most of Earthscan's staff left in 1986 to form the Panos Institute. Though their relationship with UNEP remained strong, financial contributions from UNEP to the newly formed Panos Institute were severely cut.<sup>57</sup>

UNEP had a mixed record of achievements between 1972 and 1992. From its creation, its activities and effectiveness was limited due to a lack of financial resources. The Environmental Fund that had to fund UNEP never quite achieved its goal of \$100 million in the first five years. UNEP also had difficulty in working with existing UN specialised agencies like UNESCO, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Atomic Agency. These agencies felt, to a large extent, that UNEP was encroaching on

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<sup>56</sup> McCormick, pp. 108-109. See "A look back . . . from Stockholm to Rio. Environment and development: 20 years of international action" in *UN Chronicle* 29(2), June 1992, p. 63 for more international environmental conventions.

<sup>57</sup> McCormick, p. 109.

their domain.<sup>58</sup> UNEP's small staff and rapid staff turnover proved to be problematic over the years, making it difficult to establish continuous administration within the programme. Autocratic management with no delegation of authority by consecutive executive directors of UNEP, which in turn led to low staff morale, also hampered the effectiveness of UNEP.<sup>59</sup>

UNEP's most notable successes between 1972 and 1992 were the Regional Seas Programme (RSP), its involvement in the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985) and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layers. In the RSP, UNEP succeeded in bringing together 120 countries and fourteen UN specialised agencies to confront shared problems of pollution and coastal deterioration in shared seas.<sup>60</sup> The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer provided a framework for international co-operation to monitor and protect the ozone layer.<sup>61</sup> This was followed by the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layers. In terms of the Montreal Protocol 26 states agreed to freeze production and consumption of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) at 1986 levels by 1990, reduce them by another 20% by 1994 and by another 30% by 1999.<sup>62</sup> South Africa acceded to both the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol only in 1990.<sup>63</sup>

South Africa's contribution to UNEP was extremely limited. Not because the government opted to do so, but rather because of the political isolation of the country in the international political arena (due to the government's domestic policy of apartheid), of which UNEP was an extension. Although the government was invited to attend the first couple of meetings shortly after UNEP came into existence, the country was refused attendance of subsequent meetings and was never invited to become part of the Governing Council. Participation in the appraisal conference, held in Nairobi in 1982 to assess the progress (or lack thereof) made since UNCHE, hosted by UNEP, was also denied.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> M.K. Tolba, *Development without destruction: evolving environmental perceptions*, pp. 139-142.

<sup>59</sup> McCormick, p. 111; Rowland, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> McCormick, pp. 114-116.

<sup>61</sup> "The Earth Summit" in *UN Chronicle* 29(2), June 1992, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Mowrey and Redmond, p. 354.

<sup>63</sup> P.G.W. Henderson, *Environmental laws of South Africa* 2, page numbered Conventions 3.

<sup>64</sup> Wiley, pp. 4-5.

## 2.4 Governments and the environment: the case of the USA

The perceived environmental crisis not only prompted the UN to act, but, more importantly, led to the placing of the environment on many national political agendas from the late 1960s onwards. In many respects the environment-related activities of individual governments were more important than those of the UN because governments alone have the legislative and executive powers to enforce environmental measures. What follows is a brief discussion of the environmental activities of the United States government between 1972 and 1992. The choice of the US government as an example of how governments responded to the perceived environmental degradation was strongly influenced by the fact that over the years the USA, as a superpower, has played a dominant role in various fields in the international arena.

The beginning of the conservation movement in the USA in the late nineteenth century increased the role played by the federal government in resource conservation and public health. Early federal efforts include the banning of timber cutting on large tracts of public land between 1891 and 1897, and the enactment of the Reclamation Act in 1902 to promote irrigation and water development projects in the arid Western parts of the USA.<sup>65</sup> America's first conservation-minded president, Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909), set an example for his fellow heads of state by being responsible for the creation of five new national parks and eighteen national monuments, and by adding millions of hectares to existing public forests.<sup>66</sup>

Prior to the 1960s, the main environmental concerns for the federal government remained resource conservation and the improvement of public health. An important landmark in the 1960s was the passing of the Wilderness Act in 1964. It was the first time in the history of the USA that an area of wilderness (wetlands) could be set aside with the guarantee that no commercial activities would be permitted on the terrain. By signing this act, Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969) set a global precedent in the

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<sup>65</sup> G.T. Muller, p. 37.

<sup>66</sup> S.E. Morison, H. Commager and W.E. Leuchtenburg, *A concise history of the American republic 2: Since 1865* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. T2-T3; E. Morris, "Theodore Roosevelt" in *Time* 151(15), 13.4.98, p. 38.

conservation of wetlands, but he also antagonised supporters in the mining, timber, oil, gas and cattle industries.<sup>67</sup>

Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon (1969-1974), never claimed to be the "environmental president", but he did a great deal more to improve the environment than his predecessors did. When Nixon became president, environmental problems due to pollution (see section 2.1) had already caught public attention. Preparations for Earth Day started late in 1969 and Nixon not only gave his personal support to the planned event, but also instructed environment-related government agencies to get involved. Nixon went a step further in 1970 and devoted a major portion of his State of the Union address to the environment.<sup>68</sup>

The cornerstone of American environmental legislation, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted on 1 January 1970. NEPA was a direct result of the growing public concern with the environment and the public demand for stronger federal involvement in environmental protection. One of the major components of NEPA was that it required all proposed federal programmes to carry out environmental impact assessments (EIAs). It also created the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to advise the president on national environmental policies.<sup>69</sup>

The establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 1970 provided the USA, for the first time, with an independent pollution control agency. The EPA was responsible for the regulation and enforcement of federal programmes on air and water pollution, environmental radiation, pesticides and solid wastes, and to some extent for research. The EPA became the biggest regulatory agency in Washington. Its initial 8 000 staff members and \$455 million budget, increased to 13 000 staff and \$1,35 billion by 1981.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Gottlieb, p. 43; Dowie, p. 32.

<sup>68</sup> Gottlieb, pp. 108-109.

<sup>69</sup> McCormick, p. 134.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

Between 1970 and 1980, 23 federal environmental acts were enacted, which included the Clear Air Act (1970), the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1970), the Water Pollution Control Act (1972), the Marine Protection Act (1972), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972), the Endangered Species Act (1973), the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), the Toxic Substances Control Act (1976), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (1976), the Clean Water Act (1977) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (Superfund, 1980).<sup>71</sup>

Federal involvement in environmental matters increased during the presidential term of Jimmy Carter (1977-1981). Carter appointed a number of competent and experienced environmentalists to key positions in the EPA, the Department of Interior and the newly established Department of Energy.<sup>72</sup> These included Joseph Browder of the Environmental Policy Centre; Katherine Fletcher, Harris Sherman and Gerald Meral of the Environmental Defense Fund, and Gus Speth and John Bryson, co-founders of the National Resources Defense Council.<sup>73</sup> Carter also showed sensitivity towards the growing understanding among natural scientists of the time that environmental problems were not restricted to national and regional boundaries. In 1977 he requested the QED and the State Department to investigate the probable changes that would occur in global demography, natural resources and the general environment to the end of the twentieth century. Their report, *The global 2000 report to the President: entering the twenty-first century*, was tabled in 1980, and concluded that unprecedented global co-operation and commitment were essential if humankind was to have a viable future into the next century.<sup>74</sup>

The signing of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act in 1976 sparked off renewed conflict between the federal government and the ranchers, miners, loggers, developers, farmers and politicians in Western USA. The act gave the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) real authority, for the first time, to manage the public lands under its control, 85% of which were in the twelve western states. A political

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<sup>71</sup> Dowie, p. 33.

<sup>72</sup> The Department of Energy was created to develop a long-term strategy that would reduce the dependence of the USA on imported oil. Its creation should be seen against the background of the 1973 oil crisis and the 1979 revolution in Iran. G.T. Miller, p. 42.

<sup>73</sup> Gottlieb, p. 130.

<sup>74</sup> McCormick, pp. 171-174.

campaign, the Sagebrush rebellion, was launched by interested parties in the West with the aim of removing federal control over western lands and placing these tracts of land under the control of the states. The Sagebrush rebels would then try to persuade the state legislatures to open these tracts of land to development.<sup>75</sup>

Many of Carter's environmental developments were either halted or undone during the presidency of Ronald Reagan (1981-1989). Reagan, a self-declared Sagebrush rebel, launched an anti-environmental revolution in which he sought regulatory changes (with agendas set by an anti-environmental business community) and through shifting the responsibility of environmental protection from the federal government to the state legislatures. One of his first acts was to appoint anti-environment orientated administrators to key environmental positions. James Watt became the new Secretary of the Interior. Watt was in favour of strong private enterprise policies and against federal regulation. His policies included the exploitation of oil and gas in wetlands, and the privatisation of all lands owned by the Forest Service and the BLM. Anne Gorsuch was appointed as administrator of the EPA. Gorsuch's appointment was seen as a signal that the White House intended to move the EPA's sympathies from environmentalists to business and other interested parties.<sup>76</sup> Another tactic employed by the Reagan administration was cutbacks in funding to key environmental departments. Between 1981 and 1983 a 29% budget and 23% personnel cutback was enforced on the EPA. Reagan also dismissed half of the CEQ staff and halved its budget. Federal courts were also loaded with judges likely to favour corporations over environmental groups.<sup>77</sup>

Reagan's anti-environmental stance enabled anti-environmental groups in the USA to come forward and actively campaign against environmental policies. The best-known anti-environmental coalition, the Wise-Use Movement, was formed in 1988 and its members came mostly from real estate, mining, oil, coal and ranching interests. The goal of the Wise-Use Movement, according to one of its leaders, Ron Arnold, was to "systematically destroy the environmental movement in the United States". Some of

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<sup>75</sup> G.T. Miller, pp. 42-47.

<sup>76</sup> McCormick, pp. 135-137; S.P. Hays, *Beauty, health and permanence: environmental politics in the United States, 1955-1985*, p. 494. See also pp. 491-526 for a detailed discussion of Reagan's anti-environmental revolution.

<sup>77</sup> G.T. Miller, pp. 694-695; McCormick, pp. 134, 136.

the movement's specific goals included the modification of the Endangered Species Act so that economic factors would override preservation of endangered and threatened species, and the opening up of all protected lands (national parks, wildlife refuges and wetlands) to oil drilling, mining, off-road vehicles and commercial development.<sup>78</sup>

Reagan's successor, George Bush (1989-1993) showed more sensitivity towards environmental issues and even suggested that he would become the "environmental president". He backed this suggestion by naming William Reilly of the Conservation Foundation as the new director of the EPA.<sup>79</sup> Though Bush tried to be sensitive towards environmental issues, he will be remembered for his initial refusal to attend the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992). Only after public opinion turned against him on this issue (it was presidential election year in the USA) did he turn up, well after the summit had started.<sup>80</sup>

Despite many shortcomings, the structures created to facilitate governmental environmental administration in the USA have proved their worth between 1972 and 1992. The EPA, in particular, earned the status of being the pollution watchdog agency in the country and subsequently became the envy of many ENGOs in South Africa, which lacked a similar pollution regulatory agency.

## 2.5 Green politics

Concern for the environment also found expression in party politics in many countries and led to the founding of green political parties. According to Ferdinand Müller-Rommel there are three categories of green political parties: already existing, small socialist parties that adopted an environmental agenda and changed into green parties; liberal and agrarian parties that had traditionally concerned themselves with

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<sup>78</sup> G.T. Miller, p. 702.

<sup>79</sup> Gottlieb, p. 201.

<sup>80</sup> C.P. Alexander, "On the defensive" in *Time* 139(24), 15.6.1992, p. 50; J. Adler and M. Hager, "Earth at the summit" in *Newsweek* 119(22), 1.6.1992, pp. 16-17.



environmental issues, and newly formed green parties set up to provide a voice for the environment in the traditional political system of countries.<sup>81</sup>

Contrary to the general held belief, the world's first green party was not the Values Party of New Zealand. The founding of the United Tasmania Group (UTG) in Australia preceded that of the Values Party by one month when it came into existence in April 1972. The UTG was formed to resist plans to flood Lake Pedder in Tasmania as part of a hydroelectric development plan.<sup>82</sup> A month later the Values Party was formed in Wellington, New Zealand. It contested nearly half of the seats in the general election of 1972, winning 2,8% of the votes by placing emphasis on issues such as energy, the environment and the equality of women. In 1975 the Values Party won 5,2% of the vote, but their support fell to 2,5% in the 1978 election, and diminished even further to 0,2% in the 1981 and the 1984 elections. Though it achieved 5,2% of the vote at its height, the Values Party was never able to gain parliamentary representation due to the electoral system in New Zealand.<sup>83</sup>

Even though the first green parties were formed in Australia and New Zealand, Western Europe came to dominate the green political scene from the late 1970s onwards. The first West-European green party, the People Party (renamed the Ecology Party in 1975 and renamed again in 1985 as the Green Party), was founded in Britain in February 1973. Even though it has contested local, general and European elections since 1974, the Green Party has never been able to gain representation in the British Parliament.<sup>84</sup> The Partido Popular Monarquico in Portugal followed in May 1974 and the already existing Movimento Democrático Português (founded in 1969) started to adopt a green agenda in the course of the 1970s.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> F. Müller-Rommel, "Ecology parties in Western Europe" in *West European Politics* 5(1), January 1982, pp. 68-74.

<sup>82</sup> P.R. Hay and M.G. Haward, "Comparative green politics: beyond the European context?" in *Political Studies* 36(3), September 1988, pp. 433-453.

<sup>83</sup> S. Rainbow, *Green politics*, pp. ix-x; McCormick, p. 140.

<sup>84</sup> J. Porritt (ed.), *Friends of the Earth handbook*, pp. 13-14; J. Sallnow and S. Arlett, "Green today gone tomorrow?" in *Geographical Magazine* 61(11), November 1989, p. 11; W. Rüdiger and P.D. Lowe, "The withered 'greening' of British politics: a study of the Ecology Party" in *Political Studies* 34(2), June 1986, pp. 262-284.

<sup>85</sup> H. Vollgraaff, "Ekologisme: 'n alternatiewe lewenswyse" in *Annals of the South African Cultural History Museum* 7(1), November 1995, pp. 43-44.

Despite the existence of a few green parties, green parties only gained international attention in 1983 when the German party, Die Grünen, became the first green party to gain representation in a national parliament. In the German national election of May 1983, Die Grünen won 5,6% of the vote (thereby passing the 5% minimum required by law for representation in a provincial assembly or the Bundestag) and gained 27 seats in the Bundestag.<sup>86</sup> The origin of green politics in the Federal Republic of Germany may be traced back to the anti-repression movement (early 1970s)<sup>87</sup>, the anti-nuclear movement (mainly renouncing the use of nuclear energy, 1960s-1980s) and the peace movement (anti-NATO oriented, that campaigned against the siting of middle-range nuclear missiles in Germany).<sup>88</sup>

Die Grünen was founded on 13 January 1980 when four green orientated groupings amalgamated to form a single political party. Die Grünen consisted of people who felt concerned about the way the industrial civilisation was moving in the Federal Republic. It attracted conservationists (concerned with environmental protection), Christians (concerned with the destruction of creation), educated liberals (concerned with global ecology), technicians (with insight into risk-technology), socialists (concerned with the consequences of capitalism) and neo-Marxist-Leninists (seeing Die Grünen as the first opportunity for a truly left-wing party).<sup>89</sup>

Due to its diverse support base, the founding principle was dialogue, not only within the party itself, but also between Die Grünen and the citizens. It stood for four ideals, namely ecology, social responsibility, grassroots citizenship and non-violence. The

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<sup>86</sup> Sallnow and Arlett, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> The anti-repression movement was sparked off by the *Radikalenerlass* issued by the Federal Government in 1972. The *Radikalenerlass* produced an employment ban on "radical" job seekers in the civil service. These "radical" job seekers were mostly those students who participated in the student movement of the late sixties and who had neo-Marxist or socialist leanings. G.O. Kvistad, "Between state and society: green political ideology in the mid-1980s" in *West European Politics* 10(2), April 1987, p. 218.

<sup>88</sup> H. Lippelt, "The German case: Die Grünen. Short history - basic ideas", <<http://www.hrz.uni-oldenburg.de/~oliver/bg/history.html>>, November 1991. See also H. Wiesenhal (edited by J. Ferris), *Realism in green politics: social movements and ecological reform in Germany*, pp. 190-223.

<sup>89</sup> Lippelt. The Federal Republic of Germany never had a strong left-wing political sector due to the promotion of a strong anti-communistic milieu by consecutive governments after 1945. Vollgraaff, p. 10.

members saw the position of the party as being "neither left nor right, we are in front of them all".<sup>90</sup>

Die Grünen was not an immediate success with the electorate. In the general election of 1980 they managed to gain only 1,5% of the vote. The big breakthrough came in the 1983 election when their 5,6% of the vote gave them 27 seats in the Bundestag. This percentage was increased in the 1987 general election to 8,2% which meant 42 seats in the parliament.<sup>91</sup> Their position on German unification had them thrown out of the Bundestag in 1989. German unification was the single most important issue in the 1989 general election and even though Die Grünen spoke out in favour of a democratic, independent East Germany, the party opted not to make an issue out of unification. They went into the general election with the slogan "they all are speaking about the nation, we are speaking about the weather", lost 4,9% of electoral support and with only 3,3% of the votes were denied further parliamentary representation.<sup>92</sup>

Die Grünen's success in the 1987 general election should be seen against the background of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the USSR. A safety test gone wrong resulted in the meltdown of reactor no 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power-station on 25 and 26 April 1986. A south-easterly wind carried the radioactive nuclear fall-out (isotopes of plutonium and uranium) first to Scandinavia and then to Western Europe where abnormally high levels of radioactivity were measured. Apart from focusing attention on the dangers involved in the generation of nuclear energy, Chernobyl further heightened the level of environmental awareness to an unprecedented level across the globe.<sup>93</sup>

Renewed environmental awareness among the electorate in turn meant higher voting percentages for green parties across Western Europe. Besides Die Grünen, Verdi, in Italy, took 2,5% of the votes in the June 1987 general election, thereby gaining 13

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<sup>90</sup> B. Devall, *Simple in means, rich in ends: practising deep ecology*, p. 135; K. Brynard, "Groenes tem hul ou beleid" in *Insig*, December 1989, p. 19.

<sup>91</sup> Sallnow and Arlett, pp. 10-11.

<sup>92</sup> Lippelt.

<sup>93</sup> Greenpeace, *Greenpeace zwartboek over het nucleaire tijdperk*, pp. 257-268; J.O. Jackson, "Nuclear time bombs" in *Time* 140(23), 7.12.1992, pp. 36, 41.

representatives in the Chamber of Deputies. In Sweden, the Miljöpartiet de Gröna increased its percentage of the votes in the general election from 1,5% in 1985 to 5,5% in 1988 which gave them 20 seats in the Riksdag (parliament). The Miljöpartiet de Gröna subsequently became the first new party to enter the Swedish parliament in 70 years. In Austria, three green groups, namely the Alternative Liste Österreich, Vereinte Grüne Österreich and the Citizen's Initiative Parliament gained a collective 4,82% of the vote in the general election of November 1986. The three groups amalgamated to form the Grüne Alternativen and became the first new group to enter the Nationalrat (parliament) since 1959.<sup>94</sup>

Green parties elsewhere in Western Europe, notably in the Netherlands, France, Belgium and Finland recorded similar successes.<sup>95</sup> Elections for the European Parliament (EP) held in 1989 also saw a sharp increase in support for green parties contesting the election. Britain's Green Party improved on its 0,7% (1979) and 0,5% (1984) voters support to an all-time high of 14,5% in the 1989 EP election. However, due to the electoral system in Britain, the Green Party did not obtain any representation in the EP.<sup>96</sup>

1989 also saw the first introduction of green political principles into party politics in South Africa, and the founding of the country's first green party, the Ecology Party, in November 1989. However, due to the political situation in South Africa at the time, green politics manifested differently in the Republic than in other parts of the globe (see section 6.3).

## **2.6 Environmental non-governmental organisations**

True activism to improve the environment between 1972 and 1992 was carried out by the environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) across the globe. The UN and its specialised agencies could only be as strong as member states allowed it to be, while governments walked a tightrope between protecting the environment and

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<sup>94</sup> Sallnow and Arlett, pp. 10-11.

<sup>95</sup> See McCormick, pp. 140-142 for a short discussion on the individual green parties in Western Europe and their electoral success rates.

<sup>96</sup> See "Table 1" in Sallnow and Arlett, p. 11; Porritt, p. 14.

realising the economic aspirations of the business community. ENGOs came forward in the late sixties to serve as educators, informers, activists and instigators of change away from environmental deterioration towards sustainable societies. They have been most active in areas where the governments would have preferred no outside attention, in many cases risking their lives to stand up for what they believed in or perceived to be the case. Thousands of ENGOs exist throughout the world, but for the purpose of this study, the focus will only be directed at Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace (being examples of internationally-minded ENGOs with broad environmental agendas), Earth First! (representing ENGOs with radical environmental agendas) and the Environmental Justice Movement (with environmental concerns that are similar to those of the black and poorer communities in South Africa).

Friends of the Earth (FoE) was established in 1969 by David Brower who had been the Executive Director of the Sierra Club<sup>97</sup> in the USA (a position he held from 1952 till May 1969). Even though Brower built the Sierra Club up to be the most influential conservation group in the country, his unorthodox methods and interest in non-conservation issues created tension between him and the board, which ultimately led to his dismissal in May 1969.<sup>98</sup> Brower went on to found FoE with the conviction that solutions to environmental problems required fundamental changes to the social structures of society. Through well-publicised campaign methods, FoE not only brought environmental evils to the public's attention, but also built up a support base which mainly consisted of the educated white middle-class.<sup>99</sup>

FoE grew rapidly after its 1969 origin in San Francisco, and offices were opened in Paris (July 1970) and London (October 1970). Representatives from national FoE offices from the UK, France, Sweden and the USA got together in the Rambouillet forest in France in 1971, which led to the establishment of FoE International (FoEI - first headquartered in San Francisco, later moved to Amsterdam).<sup>100</sup> It remained a predominately northern hemisphere organisation until the 1980s when groups from

<sup>97</sup> John Muir founded the Sierra Club in 1892 with the aim of preserving the forests and other features of the Sierra Nevada mountains. McCormick, p. 12.

<sup>98</sup> See R.A. Jones, "Fracticide in the Sierra Club" in W. Anderson (ed.), *Politics and environment: a reader in ecological crisis*, pp. 284-290 for a discussion of the conflict between Brower and the board of the Sierra Club.

<sup>99</sup> McCormick, p. 144.

<sup>100</sup> E. Matthews, "FoEI: no small miracle" in *Link* 73, July/August 1996 (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue), p. 5.

Asia, Latin America and Africa joined FoE. In 1988 the Polish Polski Klub Ekologiczny joined FoE and soon after branches in other former Eastern bloc countries, notably Estonia, the Czech Republic and the Ukraine were opened.<sup>101</sup>

Between 1972 and 1992 FoE addressed a multitude of environmental issues such as pollution, energy, transport, rain forests, wildlife and legislative changes. It also achieved a great number of successes (and failures) like the 1982 moratorium on commercial whaling issued by the International Whaling Commission.<sup>102</sup>

In 1971 nuclear tests by the USA around the island Amchitka, Alaska, led to the creation of the world's most visible ENGO, Greenpeace. In 1970, Jim Bohlen, Paul Cote and Irving Stone formed the Don't Make a Wave Committee to campaign against the US nuclear tests. (The name Greenpeace was adopted in the course of 1971.) A 24-meter halibut seiner, the *Phyllis Cormack*, was chartered by the Committee to sail into the nuclear testing area, and left Vancouver for Amchitka on 21 September 1971. Their mission was unsuccessful and the USA detonated a nuclear bomb around Amchitka on 6 November. However, due to public pressure that resulted from the Greenpeace campaign, the US government announced four months later that all nuclear tests around Amchitka would come to an end. The island was declared a nature reserve.<sup>103</sup> Sailing directly into nuclear testing areas at sea became a trademark of Greenpeace with particular attention being paid to French nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>104</sup>

Greenpeace grew rapidly from its origin in Vancouver to more than 30 branches across the world and a Greenpeace-base in Antarctica. Along the way Greenpeace broadened its scope from focusing only on anti-nuclear actions, to include campaigns

<sup>101</sup> Friends of the Earth International, *25 years for planet, for people* (pamphlet), pp. 2-3, 25.

<sup>102</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 5-19 and *Link* 73, July/August 1996 (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue), pp. 1-33 for examples of FoE successes between 1972 and 1992. See also R. Lamb (in collaboration with Friends of the Earth), *Promising the earth*, for a history of FoE England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

<sup>103</sup> M. Brown and J. May, *The Greenpeace story: the inside story of the world's most dynamic environmental pressure group* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 6-15; Greenpeace Nederland, *Greenpeace informatie brochure: geschiedenis, campagnes, successen* (brochure), p. 3; T. Bode, "De Greenpeace-droom" in *Greenpeace* 3, 1996 (Jubilee edition), p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> The most publicised confrontation between Greenpeace and the French government occurred in 1985 when the French government gave the order to sink the Greenpeace ship, *Rainbow Warrior*. At the time it was docked at the Marsden Wharf in Auckland, New Zealand. Two bombs were detonated

against toxic waste and pollution transfers, the destruction of the ozone layer, climatic changes, forests, oceans and disarmament. Notable successes are many and include the establishment of a world park in Antarctica after many years of campaigning. The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, signed in October 1991, led to the creation of a world park in Antarctica in which the ecosystem is guaranteed protection by the signatories until 2041.<sup>105</sup>

Environmental activism between 1972 and 1992 was not confined to mainstream and internationally minded ENGOs like FoE and Greenpeace. Grassroots environmental activist groups also played a prominent role and in many instances were more successful than their mainstream counterparts. The emergence of the Environmental Justice Movement in the USA from the late 1970s onwards had a profound effect on the environmental movement as a whole, mainly because it opened the predominantly white middle-class based environmental movement up to working classes and people of colour. The Environmental Justice Movement, based upon the "not-in-my-back-yard" principle, has two major tributaries: the first consists mainly of women organised in thousands of anti-toxic groups to confront perceived risks to the health of their families. The instigator that sparked off nation-wide anti-toxic campaigns in the USA, was housewife Lois Marie Gibbs and the Love Canal issue. The US authorities had allowed the development of a working class neighbourhood, Love Canal, on a toxic waste dump. After three years of campaigning by Gibbs, the authorities in 1981 permanently relocated over 500 households which had previously resided in Love Canal. Since then hundreds of struggles by local anti-toxic groups have emerged to demand environmental justice from the US government.<sup>106</sup>

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which killed one crew member, Fernando Pereira, and sank the *Rainbow Warrior*. Brown and May, pp. 112-127. See also R. Morgan and B. Whitaker, *Rainbow Warrior*, for a detailed discussion.

<sup>105</sup> P. Wapner, "In defence of banner hangers: the dark green politics of Greenpeace" in B.R. Taylor (ed.), *Ecological resistance movements: the global emergence of radical and popular environmentalism*, pp. 306-307; K. Eitner and M. Smeitink, "Hoogte- en dieptepunten" in *Greenpeace* 3, 1996 (Jubilee edition), p. 18; Greenpeace Nederland, *Antarctica gered!* (pamphlet). See also Brown and May, and *Greenpeace* 3, 1996 (Jubilee edition), pp. 1-39, for a discussion of the history of Greenpeace.

<sup>106</sup> B. Edwards, "With liberty and environmental justice for all: the emergence and challenge of grassroots environmentalism in the United States" in Taylor (ed.), pp. 35-39; Mowrey and Redmond, pp. 188-190.

The second major tributary of the Environmental Justice Movement centres around the environmental perceptions of the African American community in the USA. Focusing mainly on civil rights and social justice, African Americans stayed away from the environmental movement until the early 1980s. The first significant environmental protest by African Americans took place in Warren County, North Carolina, in 1982 and was aimed against a proposed landfill, in Warren County, for polluted soil. Prominent African American political, church and civil rights leaders got involved in the struggle, which in turn led to studies on the relation between race and toxic waste dumps, conducted by the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice. These studies found a direct correlation between the siting of hazardous waste sites and the racial composition of the community close-by, and the fight against "environmental racism"<sup>107</sup> was thus born. The high point of this movement so far has been the First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit held in Washington D.C., 24-27 October 1991. This Summit underlined the reality that the environmental movement was no longer a "white issue".<sup>108</sup>

Grassroots environmental activism was not confined to the Environmental Justice Movement. The founding of the radical ENGO, Earth First! (EF!) in 1980 added a new dimension to the environmental movement. Founded on the principle that direct action is the only way to fight back in civilisation's war against nature, EF! demands monkeywrenching,<sup>109</sup> ecotage<sup>110</sup> and non-violent action. Criticising mainstream existing ENGOs like Greenpeace and FoE for their corporate structures, EF! and its support groups have gone out of their way to build up a world-wide network with no hierarchy and structures.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> The US South African Exchange Programme on Environmental Justice defines environmental racism as "when decisions on hazardous waste siting, highway building, sewage treatment plant planning, gentrification, poor working conditions, clean-up of waste sites, burying of nuclear waste, and delivery of services directly or indirectly impact on communities of color". South African Exchange Programme on Environmental Justice, "What interests us", <<http://www.igc.apc.org/saepej/Interests.html>>, *s.a.*

<sup>108</sup> Edwards, pp. 39-41.

<sup>109</sup> Monkeywrenching is the "purposeful dismantling or disabling of artefacts used in environmentally destructive practices at a specific site". Devall, p. 140.

<sup>110</sup> Ecotage (i.e. ecological counter-sabotage) is "disabling a technological or bureaucratic operation in defense of one's place. It is self-defense". *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-141; A. Dobson (ed.), *The green reader*, p. 225; South Downs EF!, "An introduction to Earth First! in the UK", <<http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/campaigns/ef/efhtmls/introduction.html>>, *s.a.*



EF! announced itself in 1980 by unfurling a plastic "crack" down the face of the Glen Canyon Dam, thereby symbolically "liberating" the Colorado River from the dam. EF! has since been involved in struggles against the destruction of the rain forests and the building of highways, to name but two. Its self-proclaimed navy, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, is best known for sinking whaling ships and claims credit for sinking or scuttling five whaling vessels.<sup>112</sup>

The founding of EF! and its activities since 1980 has added a much-needed component to the ENGO sector of the environmental movement. It was founded at a time when the more mainstream groups were moving away from their protesting phase towards a more rational form of environmentalism, co-operating especially in the writing and implementing of policy within governments and sometimes in UN structures. With the ENGO sector being a variety of all sorts, the ENGO movement also needed groups like EF! to run highly publicised and at times dangerous campaigns in order to bring the seriousness of the environmental crisis home to humankind.<sup>113</sup>

In contrast to other parts of the globe, South African ENGOs were slow to incorporate politics into their environmental agendas. Only from 1988 onwards did ENGOs similar to Greenpeace and FoE start to emerge in the country, and did the environment become a political issue within the South African context (see section 6.2). Meanwhile, the international political and environmental communities started preparing for the 1992 Earth Summit, which eventually became the biggest international conference ever held in history.

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<sup>112</sup> B.R. Taylor, "Earth First! and global narratives of popular ecological resistance" in Taylor (ed.), pp. 14-15, 28 (notes nos 9 and 10); Devall, pp. 138-139. See also M.M. Cooper, "Environmental rhetoric in the age of hegemonic politics: Earth First! and the Nature Conservancy" in C.G. Herndl and S.C. Brown (eds), *Green culture: environmental rhetoric in contemporary America*, pp. 236-260.

<sup>113</sup> Interview: Kevin Dunion, Edinburgh, 18.12.1997.

## 2.7 The Earth Summit (1992)

### 2.7.1 The road to Rio

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1992, had important forerunners in the 1980s, the first of which was the publication of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) in March 1980. The WCS was commissioned by UNEP, and both UNEP and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) provided financial assistance. It was the product of nearly five years of consultation with more than 700 scientists and enjoyed the full endorsement of the FAO and UNESCO.<sup>114</sup>

The aim of the WCS was threefold, namely to: "1. explain the contribution of living resource conservation to human survival and to sustainable development; 2. [to] identify the priority conservation issues and the main requirements for dealing with them; 3. [and to] propose effective ways for achieving the Strategy's aim."<sup>115</sup> Conservation was defined as "the management of human use of the biosphere so that it might yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations".<sup>116</sup> The three specific objectives of the WCS were identified as the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life-supporting systems, the preservation of genetic diversity and the ensuring of sustainable utilisation of species and ecosystems.<sup>117</sup>

The IUCN and its partners hoped that all governments would adopt the conservation principles outlined in the WCS at national level. Subsequently national conservation strategies were strongly promoted by the IUCN as the way in which individual countries could become sustainable societies. By 1987, 41 countries had acted or were

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<sup>114</sup> Tolba, pp. 136-137.

<sup>115</sup> IUCN, UNEP and WWF, *World Conservation Strategy: living resource conservation for sustainable development*, p. iv.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, section 1.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

thinking of action, but only eight<sup>118</sup> had published a national conservation strategy. In South Africa, the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa, and not the South African government, responded to the IUCN's call to develop national conservation strategies. Their updated policy, entitled *A national strategy for environmental conservation in South Africa 1980*, was published in 1980.<sup>119</sup> The WCS was not the success the IUCN, UNEP and the WWF had hoped for. It was, however, a step in the right direction, even though it failed to focus on the human environment preferring rather to concentrate on the outdated conservation of nature and natural resources.<sup>120</sup> The WCS did promote the very important message that conservation and development do not stand on opposing sides of the fence, but could work together to ensure a sustainable future for all generations.<sup>121</sup>

The so-called Brundtland process followed the World Conservation Strategy. In 1983 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 38/161 which approved the creation of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland, the leader of the Norwegian Labour Party, was appointed to chair this newly established commission, more commonly known as the Brundtland Commission. The 23 members of the Commission were all government officials or scientists with government connections.<sup>122</sup>

The objective of the Brundtland Commission was to focus on the causes of environmental problems world-wide rather than on the effects of environmental deterioration. Its aim was not to report on the global environment, but to explore the relationship between environment and development in order to formulate a global agenda for change.<sup>123</sup> Between March 1985 and February 1987, the Commission

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<sup>118</sup> South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia, Madagascar, New Zealand, Vietnam and Zambia.

<sup>119</sup> J.A. Pringle, *The conservationists and the killers: the story of game protection and the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa*, pp. 278, 295.

<sup>120</sup> McCormick, pp. 160-170. See also M. Reddclift, *Sustainable development: exploring the contradictions*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>121</sup> IUCN, UNEP and WWF, *Caring for the earth: a strategy for sustainable development*, pp. 1-2. See rest of document for the second World Conservation Strategy published by the IUCN, UNEP and the WWF in 1991.

<sup>122</sup> T. Princen and M. Finger, *Environmental NGOs in world politics: linking the local and the global*, pp. 187-188; World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our common future*, p. 352-356.

<sup>123</sup> Reddclift, pp. 12-13.

sponsored more than 75 studies and reports, and held meetings or hearings in ten countries. Its report, *Our common future*, was published in October 1987.<sup>124</sup>

*Our common future* addressed a wide range of areas including population and human resources, food security, species and ecosystems, energy, industrialisation and urbanisation. It reaffirmed the inseparable link between environment and development and the key concept in the report was "sustainable development". It defined this widely interpreted concept as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".<sup>125</sup>

It not only acknowledged the need, but also strongly promoted growth in developing countries where the origin of most of their environmental problems lies in the lack of development. This growth had to be sustainable in order to preserve something for future generations.<sup>126</sup> It also refused to accept the preferred viewpoint that environmental problems can and should be addressed through their causes, and was highly critical of conventional environmental management where the environment always occupied a secondary position to development.<sup>127</sup>

It further called upon the UN General Assembly to transform the Brundtland Commission into a "UN Programme of Action on Sustainable Development" to carry on with the ideas outlined in *Our common future*. It also recommended that an international conference should be convened to review the present environmental situation.<sup>128</sup> Due to its isolation within the UN and its specialised agencies, South Africa did not contribute to the important Brundtland process, which in turn meant that few of the new developments in the official administration of environmental affairs filtered through to the country (see section 6.6).

After the Brundtland Commission submitted its report to the UN General Assembly in October 1987, the Commission officially dissolved in December 1987. To continue

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<sup>124</sup> McCormick, pp. 192-193.

<sup>125</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, p. 43.

<sup>126</sup> N. Middleton, P. O'Keefe and S. Moyo, *The tears of the crocodile: from Rio to reality in the developing world*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>127</sup> Reddclift, p. 14.

<sup>128</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, p. 343.

the work of the Commission, Warren Lindner established the charitable foundation, the Centre for Our Common Future, in April 1988 with voluntary funds, to promote the Brundtland Report. The Centre established 160 working partners in about 70 countries - these working partners came to be known as the "Brundtland constituency". After the UN decided in 1989 to convene an international conference on the environment, the Centre for Our Common Future became instrumental in mobilising their own Brundtland constituency and other interested parties to participate in the planned event.<sup>129</sup>

### **2.7.2 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development**

The proposal to convene the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was approved on 22 December 1989 when the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 44/228. This resolution called for a global summit on environment and development to follow up the Brundtland report. Maurice Strong was appointed Secretary-General of UNCED, a position he had held twenty years earlier at UNCHE as well.<sup>130</sup>

Between 1990 and 1992 five meetings of the UNCED Preparatory Committee were held at which the content of the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, environmental financing and possible institutional arrangements were negotiated. The signing of two conventions, on biodiversity and on climatic change, were also planned for UNCED. These conventions were negotiated in two separate processes. All these negotiations took place mainly among government representatives with limited input from ENGOS. The UNCED secretariat also set up working groups on forestry, atmosphere, environment and development, technology transfer information, biotechnology, oceans, land resources and agriculture, biodiversity and environmental education. Representatives from the IUCN (3), Greenpeace (1), the Environment and Development Action in the Third World (1), the US Conservation Fund (1) and the US Environmental Defense Fund (1) were included in the working groups.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Princen and Finger, pp. 192-193.

<sup>130</sup> "The Earth Summit" in *UN Chronicle* 29(2), June 1992, pp. 40-42.

<sup>131</sup> Princen and Finger, pp. 196-197.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, on the twentieth anniversary of its predecessor, UNCHE. Delegates from 178 countries and 110 heads of state participated in the official events. South Africa was not invited to send an official delegation, but was allowed to send governmental observers to the official proceedings (see section 6.6). These 178 countries sent 10 000 official delegates, many of whom were prominent environmentalists from ENGOs included in the official national delegations. Nearly 1 400 UN accredited ENGOs from across the world, joined the hundreds of indigenous groups, the Dalai Lama and other clerics, artists, green-minded parliamentarians and the 8 749 media personnel for the largest and most complex conference ever held. Like Stockholm twenty years earlier, UNCED was divided into two parts, namely the official governments' meeting and the Global Forum '92 to accommodate the private citizens and representatives from ENGOs. These two parts were strategically kept apart with the Global Forum '92 meetings planned for central Rio and the governments' meeting for the Rio Centre 40 km outside the city.<sup>132</sup>

The aim of UNCED was to produce the aforementioned documents. Negotiations continued for the first ten days of the summit and the documents were up for acceptance in the remaining two days. In the debate, the differences between the developed and the developing states emerged as a sharp dividing factor. In the post-Cold War era where a strong economy determined a country's position in global political relationships, the gap between developed and developing states seemed greater than before. Central to these differences were three key questions: firstly, should developed countries be required to make substantial cutbacks in their emissions and rates of resources depletion before developing countries were required to do so? Secondly, should developed countries provide financial assistance, up front, for developing countries to help these states reduce pollution and resource depletion? Thirdly, whether and in what way developing countries should have access to Western technologies in order to help developing countries speed up their economic development?<sup>133</sup>

<sup>132</sup> D. Korten, "The Earth Summit, Brazil 1992" in *Indicator South Africa* 9(2), Autumn 1992, p. 10; R. Elmer-Dewitt, "Rich vs. poor" in *Time* 139(22), 1.6.1992, p. 26; *Vrye Weekblad*, 2.10.1992, p. 23; D. Lovejoy, "What happened at Rio?" in *The Planner* 78(15), 7.8.1992, p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> W.A. Nitze, "Swords into ploughshares: agenda for change in the developing world" in *International Affairs* 69(1), January 1993, pp. 39-40.

UNCED produced three documents and two conventions. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, is a non-binding statement of 27 principles for protecting the environment. These principles acknowledged *inter alia* that all role-players should be involved in the implementation of sustainable development policies, the vital role women have to play in order to realise the goal of sustainable societies, the human rights of indigenous groups, and the importance of global co-operation.<sup>134</sup>

The centrepiece of UNCED was Agenda 21, a non-binding, detailed action plan to guide countries in their efforts to obtain sustainable development. Agenda 21 starts out by proclaiming that "humanity stands at a defining moment in history", a moment in which environment-related problems are acute world-wide, and that the only way to combat this environmental threat is to work together globally for sustainable development. This action plan concentrated on four main areas, namely social and economic dimensions, conservation and management of resources, strengthening the role of major groups, and the means of implementation. Agenda 21 acknowledged that implementing sustainable developmental policies would require additional financial resources in the developing world. It suggested that developed countries contribute to these costs in the form of aid to developing countries.<sup>135</sup>

UNCED also produced a Statement of Principles on Forests, a non-binding broad statement on the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests.<sup>136</sup> The only legally binding documents at UNCED were the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity, which were opened for signing at UNCED. The main aim of the Climate Change Convention was to get countries to commit themselves to the reduction of their emissions of greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The Biodiversity Convention recognised, but without compulsion, that countries should conserve plant and animal species diversity within their borders.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> See "The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development" in J. Quarrie (ed.), *Earth Summit 1992*, pp. 11-13 for full text.

<sup>135</sup> See "Agenda 21" in Quarrie (ed.), pp. 46-240 for an abridged version of Agenda 21.

<sup>136</sup> See J. Holmberg, K. Thomson and L. Timberlake, *Facing the future: beyond the Earth Summit*, p. 28, and M. Keating, *The Earth Summit's agenda for change: a plain language version of Agenda 21 and the other Rio agreements*, p. 63 for more details.

<sup>137</sup> Lovejoy, p. 13.



The USA, made out by many at UNCED to be the "eco bad guy", refused to sign the biodiversity treaty and refused to agree on any specific targets in the reduction of their emissions. This should be seen against the background fact that the USA uses 25% of the world's total energy consumption and in the process emits 22% of the world's total CO<sub>2</sub> into the air. The refusal of the USA to give in to limitations imposed from outside stems from the belief that protecting the environment would damage the economy of the USA. The world's largest economy (25% of the world's total GNP) is also the economy least interested in pursuing sustainable economic practices.<sup>138</sup>

The most tangible outcome of UNCED was the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) by the UN. The CSD is made up of representatives of 53 governments (UN member states) and is mandated to review the implementation of Agenda 21, and to provide policy guidance to governments and major groups involved in this process. The CSD falls under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council of the UN.<sup>139</sup> The successes and failures of UNCED were many, but despite the frustrations of Rio, at the very least, it produced dialogue between governments and a vague commitment to pursue sustainable development policies.

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The global environmental movement has come a long way in the twenty years in between its two watershed events, namely UNCHE and UNCED. As such, the focus of the two conferences differed considerably, with UNCHE concentrating on the influence of human activity on the environment, and UNCED being more concerned with the world's economy and how the environment affected it.<sup>140</sup> The major outcomes of the two conferences also differed, with UNCHE succeeding in placing the environment on national and international political agendas, which led directly to the institutionalisation of environmental affairs within governmental and UN structures. UNCED, on the other hand, succeeded in redirecting the global environmental movement towards the goal of sustainable development. It further

<sup>138</sup> Holmberg, Thomson and Timberlake, p. 8; Elmer-Dewitt, p. 26.

<sup>139</sup> "Rionewal: taking stock" in *UN Chronicle* 34(2), 1997, p. 9.

<sup>140</sup> R. Sandbrook, "From Stockholm to Rio" in Quarrie (ed.), p. 16.



established that environmental problems were global problems that demanded the co-operative attention of all the governments of the world.

These differences between UNCHE and UNCED can be ascribed to the developments in the global environmental movement between 1972 and 1992, and also to an increase in the human understanding of the processes of the natural environment. Of particular importance was the contribution made by ENGOs whose activism ensured that governmental and UN attention remained on the environment, despite the tensions of the Cold War. By 1992, however, the Cold War was over and UNCED ushered in a period of unprecedented national and international concern with the environment in the pursuit of the goal of sustainable development.

Against this background of global environmentalism between 1972 and 1992, it is now possible to focus on the environmental movement in South Africa. Attention will first be paid to the historical roots of environmentalism in South Africa in order to place the events of 1972 to 1992 in historical perspective.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE ROOTS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1652-1972

The environmental movement in South Africa, like its counterparts across the globe, was (and still is) a desperate attempt to counteract environmental ruinous actions of the past (and present) in order to salvage something for the future. This movement was (and still is) not confined to a single ethnic group - various groups and individuals of different racial origin have participated in the effort to improve the South African environment.

Alfred Crosby writes that "the new environmentalism did not detonate but grew and therefore has no precise birthday".<sup>1</sup> He was referring to environmentalism in the USA, but the same argument is valid within the South African context. The environmentalism that came to the fore in the 1970s in South Africa has roots that go back many years. What follows is a brief overview of the environmental movement in South Africa between 1652 and 1972 in which the main activities will be highlighted.

Acknowledging the need to order the historical past through periodisation, this chapter will divide the years 1652 to 1972 into four phases: legislative protection, 1652-1883;<sup>2</sup> private interest groups, game reserves and national parks, 1883-1937;<sup>3</sup> from protectionism to the conservation of natural resources, 1937-1965,<sup>4</sup> and the environmental revolution, 1965-1972.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.W. Crosby, "The past and present of environmental history" in *The American Historical Review* 100(4), October 1995, p. 1186.

<sup>2</sup> This phase was identified by J.A. Pringle, *The conservationists and the killers: the story of game protection and the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Pringle identified the cut-off point for the second phase as 1926 - the year in which the Wildlife Society was founded and the National Parks Act was passed in the Union parliament. This act paved the way for the creation of the Kruger National Park and other national parks. It seems as though the momentum generated by the National Parks Act carried on into the 1930s with the creation of four additional national parks in 1931 and 1937. Pringle, p. 7; Department of Planning and the Environment, *Environmental conservation*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> According to Farieda Khan, the shift away from protectionism to the conservation of natural resources started in the 1940s. However, government attention started to focus on soil conservation in the 1930s and therefore 1937 is preferred in this study. F. Khan, "Soil wars: the role of the African National Soil Conservation Association in South Africa, 1953-1959" in *Environmental History* 2(4), 1997, p. 441.

<sup>5</sup> C.D. Schweizer identified 1965 as the start of the environmental revolution in South Africa. C.D. Schweizer, *Environmental and related interest groups in South Africa* 1 (M.Sc. dissertation), p. 75.

### 3.1 Legislative protection, 1652-1883

The origin of government environmental protection in South Africa dates back to the first permanent white settlement in the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. In that year the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment post at the Cape with Jan van Riebeeck as Governor. The main purpose of the refreshment post was to supply passing ships *en route* to India or Europe with fresh produce and water.

Unfortunately the first attempts at intensive agriculture failed which created some difficulties for Van Riebeeck, for he not only had to provide passing ships with produce, but he also had to feed the people in the settlement. He could also not rely on the hunters for they seemed more prone to injure themselves in the hunting process, rather than the game they were hunting. Van Riebeeck thus had to look towards Robben Island and Dassen Island, inhabited by penguins, to satisfy the daily needs of the white settlement. And it was the overexploitation of these penguins that led to the first wildlife conservation measure in South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

On 14 April 1654 Van Riebeeck issued a *placcaat* (i.e. legislation) informing the white settlers that they would henceforth be allowed only two meals daily instead of three and that each person was entitled to only half a penguin per day. Due to the heavy daily consumption of penguins (the standard portion being one penguin per person), Van Riebeeck noted that within two or three days there would be no penguins left on the islands if exploitation continued with the same intensity.<sup>7</sup>

The first anti-pollution measure followed less than a year later when the *placcaat* of 10/12 April 1655 prohibited the polluting of drinking water supplied to passing ships.<sup>8</sup> Numerous anti-pollution *placcaten* followed,<sup>9</sup> while restrictions were also placed on the burning of grass, hunting, the overexploitation and sale of wood and the sale of

<sup>6</sup> R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (eds), *The shaping of the South African society, 1652-1820*, pp. 44-45; Pringle, pp. 18, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Pringle, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> M.K. Jeffreys (ed.), *Kaapse plakkaatboek 1: 1652-1707*, *Placcaat* of 10/12 April 1655.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, *Placcaten* of 26 August 1656, 6 February 1661, 22 December 1676, 5 January 1677 and 10/11 February 1687.

venison to passing ships.<sup>10</sup> Under Governor Jacob Borghorst the first hunting licences were introduced in 1669, and Governor Simon van der Stel imposed the first comprehensive prohibition of illegal hunting, making it a criminal offence in 1680. The overexploitation of wildlife by the white settlers made it necessary for Governors Tulbagh, Van Plettenberg and Rhenius to start protecting certain species, notably the hippopotamus, rhinoceros, buffalo and eland, that were becoming rare.<sup>11</sup>

The Cape authorities were concerned mainly with those elements in nature needed for the white settlers to survive in the Cape of Good Hope. This resulted in restrictions placed on the exploitation of wildlife and forests and an attempt to control the quality of drinking water. After Britain permanently took over the control of the Cape Colony in 1806, wildlife legislation was brought in line with that in Britain itself. However, the stricter legislation was difficult to enforce because of the size of the colony and the fact that hunters tended to venture beyond colonial borders in their search for game.<sup>12</sup>

The white people in the Cape were also involved in a struggle over land and natural resources with indigenous groups, notably the San, Khoikoi and Xhosa. In this conquest the white people more often than not ended up victorious - and this process, completed only in the twentieth century, had a disastrous effect on the traditional political, economic and cultural systems of the indigenous groups. In this process indigenous groups not only lost their political freedom as the whites extended their authority over them, but also their economic means of survival through restrictions placed on hunting.<sup>13</sup>

The Great Trek of the 1830s and the settlement of the white people in the interior had far-reaching environmental consequences.<sup>14</sup> The environmental impact of the white expansion into the interior differed from that of the initial settlement in the Cape in

<sup>10</sup> G.F. Barkhuizen, *Die administrasie van omgewingsbewing in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika* (D.Admin. thesis), pp. 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> D. Hey, "The history and status of nature conservation in South Africa" in A.C. Brown (ed.), *A history of scientific endeavour in South Africa*, p. 135.

<sup>12</sup> E.J. Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: a social and political history*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> H.J. van Aswegen, *History of South Africa to 1854*, pp. 108-114, 116-118, 139-148.

<sup>14</sup> See F.J. Potgieter, "Die vestiging van die blanke in Transvaal (1837-1886) met spesiale verwysing na die verhouding tussen die mens en die omgewing" in *Archives Year Book for South African History* 28 (II), for the environmental impact of white settlement in the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek.

that it took the Natal Colony and the two Boer republics a much shorter time to reach a crisis situation.<sup>15</sup> This was mainly due to the improvement in arms (which made the century of the big hunt possible) and to the fact that white people in general had become more adapted to the South African environment. They were in a much better position to harness nature than their predecessors at the Cape were.<sup>16</sup>

The destruction of wildlife continued with hunting and the profits thereof being the economic foundation of the white political entities in the interior. By 1858 ivory was Natal's main export commodity and it produced £31 754 in revenue. The ivory exports peaked in 1877 when 19 350 kg left the colony. By 1895 annual exports had fallen to 30 kg. In 1855 the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) exported an estimated 90 000 kg of ivory, while in 1866 one company alone in the Orange Free State (OFS) exported 152 000 blesbok and wildebeest skins.<sup>17</sup> The villains in the ivory trade were not only the white settlers as black tribes actively participated and competed with one another to gain control.<sup>18</sup>

The nineteenth century is known as the era of the great hunt in which "sportsmen" attempted to kill nearly all game they laid their eyes on. An open season on wildlife, that was to last for nearly a century, started in 1800 when the British Governor in the Cape, Sir George Yonge, granted all persons the right to kill wildlife, without a license or prohibition, beyond a 48 km radius from Cape Town.<sup>19</sup> The biggest hunt in South African history took place on 24 August 1860 when Prince Alfred, Queen Victoria's 16 year old son, together with Sir George Grey and a royal party, went hunting on the farm Bainsvlei (outside Bloemfontein) on the invitation of the owner, Andrew Hudson Bain. The hunt, that lasted less than an hour, left an estimated 1 000 game dead.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of hunting as a sport affected the economic livelihood of black tribes in the interior, mainly because it created the assumption that hunting as

<sup>15</sup> It took Natal for example only 60 years from the first white settler in 1824, to reach a state of environmental crisis in 1884. Pringle, pp. 10-13.

<sup>16</sup> See W. Beinart and P. Coates, *Environment and history: the taming of nature in the USA and South Africa*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11; Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park*, p. 12; J. McCormick, *The global environmental movement: reclaiming paradise*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> Pringle, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> "The greatest hunt in history" in *African Wildlife* 26(1), 1972, pp. 24-25.

a sport was noble, whereas subsistence hunting, especially with snares, was seen as "less civilised".<sup>21</sup>

This excessive hunting took place despite legislation introduced by the *Volksrade* (i.e. parliaments) of the OFS and the ZAR in 1858 and the Natal Colony in 1866.<sup>22</sup> The latter also experienced problems with forest destruction (the first commission to inquire into this affair was set up in 1878), declining fish resources, a noxious weed (*Xanthium spinosum*) and water pollution caused by effluents from the first sugar mills.<sup>23</sup>

The overexploitation of wildlife led to the drastic decline in their numbers and blame for this situation in many cases was laid on the black tribes. The whites reacted by restricting the access of black people to wildlife, denying them legal access to weapons, making them non-eligible for hunting licenses and prohibiting their ownership of hunting dogs.<sup>24</sup> Black resistance to white colonisation had by 1880 broken down and the white settlers had become land owners in the interior, in many instances occupying land previously owned by black tribes. The authorities in Natal, the ZAR and the OFS had already started issuing title deeds to white farmers and unoccupied land within the borders was proclaimed state property.<sup>25</sup>

In the Cape Colony, the authorities continued to pay attention to diminishing forests, and forest conservancies were proclaimed in the Knysna and Tsitsikama forests. The most important piece of conservation legislation passed in the Cape legislature in the nineteenth century was the Forest and Herbage Preservation Act (no 18 of 1856). This act survived in a slightly modified form as the Forestry Act (no 22 of 1888) until 1910, and was, according to Richard Grove, the most comprehensive form of conservation legislation passed in the British colonies in the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> E.J. Carruthers, " 'Police boys' and poachers: Africans, wildlife protection and national parks, the Transvaal 1902 to 1950" in *Koedoe* 36(2), 1993, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Hey, p. 135; M.A. Rabie, "Wildlife conservation and the law" in *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 6(2), July 1973, p. 148.

<sup>23</sup> Pringle, pp. 11, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Carruthers, " 'Police boys'...", pp. 12-13.

<sup>25</sup> Unie van Suid-Afrika, *Verslag van die Kommissie van Onderzoek na blanke bewoning van die platteland*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>26</sup> R. Grove, "Early themes in African conservation: the Cape in the nineteenth century" in D. Anderson and R. Grove (eds), *Conservation in Africa: people, policies and practice*, pp. 25-31.

Enforcing this piece of legislation became the responsibility of the Forest Department that was established in 1875 in the Cape Colony.<sup>27</sup>

By the end of the first phase of legislative conservation, important developments were taking place in the South African economy. In 1867 diamonds were discovered on the Vaal-Hartz River junction and soon after in Kimberley. The advent of the diamond industry led to the economic transformation of South Africa from a predominantly agricultural economy to a modern capitalist economy.<sup>28</sup> Laurence Solomon points out that by 1871 more white people were working in and around Kimberley than had taken part in the Great Trek.<sup>29</sup> He further notes that the driving force behind these economic changes were immigrants which led to the unusual situation in South Africa in which immigrants built up the economic structures required for industrialisation. Unlike other parts of the world where immigrants were absorbed into existing economic structures, it was the population of the four political entities in South Africa that was absorbed into an economic structure completely organised by immigrants.<sup>30</sup>

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Conservation through legislation dominated the first phase of the environmental movement in South Africa. Conservation was seen primarily as the duty of the authorities and despite a long record of conservation legislation, forest and game resources had seriously diminished by 1883. The most important reasons for this situation were the wasteful nature of many white people in South Africa and the fact that the authorities were unable to successfully enforce their legislative restrictions. By 1883 the stage was set for both public involvement in conservation and for tighter conservation measures, in the form of game reserves, by the authorities.

<sup>27</sup> E. Schwella and J.J. Muller, "Environmental administration" in R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental management in South Africa*, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), pp. 494-495; N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa: conquest, segregation and apartheid* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 19; R. Turrel, "Kimberley: labour and compounds, 1871-1888" in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds), *Industrialisation and social change in South Africa: African class formation, culture and consciousness*, p. 46.

<sup>29</sup> An estimated 12 000 white people participated in the Great Trek. L. Solomon, *Socio-economic aspects of South African history, 1870-1962* (Ph.D. thesis), pp. 4, 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

### 3.2 Private interests, game reserves and national parks, 1883-1937

On 21 August 1883 the first known non-governmental organisation (NGO) concerned with some sort of environmental conservation was founded in South Africa. The Natal Game Protection Association (NGPA), formed by a group of sportsmen, was a single-issue group and concerned itself only with wildlife conservation. Its stated objectives included the prosecution of all individuals breaking game laws and negotiation with the Natal authorities, when necessary, to amend or extend game laws.<sup>31</sup> Pringle sees the founding of the NGPA as an extraordinary event for it marked the beginning of public participation in conservation measures in South Africa. For 231 years since white settlement started in South Africa, wildlife conservation was primarily seen as the duty of the governments; now, for the first time, individuals organised themselves into an interest group with the aim of tightening wildlife conservation measures.<sup>32</sup>

The NGPA was founded nine days after the last quagga (*Equus quagga*), a mare, died in captivity at the Amsterdam Zoo on 12 August 1883. Nobody realised at the time that a specie had just become extinct - only after the zoo started looking for a replacement quagga did they realise that there was none left in the veld to replace it with. It took some years before the message reached South Africa because the authorities in the Cape Colony, unaware that the quagga had become extinct, gave legal protection to the quagga for the first time on 6 July 1886 (act no 36 of 1886). This act prohibited the killing of quaggas without special permission from the Cape Governor.<sup>33</sup>

By 1883 the political situation in South Africa was all but calm. The ZAR had its sovereignty restored, with Paul Kruger as president, on 27 February 1884, which ended the British annexation of the ZAR that started on 12 April 1877. Meanwhile the Natal authorities broke the power of the Zulu kingdom in 1879 and proceeded to formally extend their authority over the Zulus by annexing Zululand in 1887. The Cape Colony and the OFS entered relatively peaceful political periods. The Cape

<sup>31</sup> "The history of the Wildlife Society" in *African Wildlife* 30(5), 1976, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> Pringle, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 14-16; "1883-1983: centennial of the extinction of the quagga" in *African Wildlife* 37(4), 1983, pp. 146-148; J.C. Greig, "Editorial: the lesson of the quagga" in *African Wildlife* 37(4), 1983, pp. 134-135.



Colony started to expand its territory by gradually incorporating land owned by black tribes along the eastern and northern borders of the colony. Meanwhile white farmers in the OFS bought up most of the land within the republic still owned by black tribes.<sup>34</sup>

Economic changes brought about by the diamond industry in the Northern Cape, were further accelerated by the discovery of the main gold reef on the farm Langlaagte (present-day Johannesburg) in 1886. This discovery was the product of extensive prospecting that had been going on in the ZAR for twenty years. The gold industry developed faster and better than the diamond industry and led to the gold rush in which thousands of people flocked to Johannesburg in search of wealth. Increasing urbanisation led to a greater demand for meat products to sustain the non-farming urban population. This in turn placed greater pressure in the dwindling wildlife resources in the ZAR.<sup>35</sup>

The first initiative to formally protect wildlife by establishing game reserves was taken by the ZAR government.<sup>36</sup> In August 1889 seven government owned farms, situated in the south-eastern corner of the ZAR along the Pongola River (bordering both Swaziland and Zululand), were set aside for conservation purposes. It took about five years before the ZAR government officially proclaimed the Pongola Game Reserve on 13 June 1894 with H.F. van Oordt as its first game warden. The Pongola Game Reserve was short-lived and the Union government de-proclaimed it in 1921.<sup>37</sup>

The Natal Colony followed the ZAR's initiative and in April 1897 proclaimed four game reserves at Umfolozi, Hluhluwe, St Lucia and Umdhletse. Like the Pongola Game Reserve, these newly proclaimed reserves were all situated on agriculturally poor land, though the game within its borders formed an integral part of the economic

<sup>34</sup> C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *Five hundred years: a history of South Africa* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), pp. 195-203, 268-276; Davenport, pp. 74-75, 149-154.

<sup>35</sup> N.C. Pollock and S. Agnew, *An historical geography of South Africa*, pp. 177-180.

<sup>36</sup> It is important not to confuse game reserves with national parks. Game reserves provide sanctuaries for wildlife with no or little human interference. A national park is created by an act of parliament (it thus has greater legal protection than game reserves), and entails interaction between the protected ecosystem and humans (mainly tourists). Carruthers, "Police boys'...", p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> See E.J. Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal 1846 to 1926" in *Archives Year Book for South African History* 58, pp. 45-67, and E.J. Carruthers, "The Pongola Game Reserve: an eco-political study" in *Koedoe* 28, 1985, pp. 1-15 for a detailed discussion.

livelihood of the Zulus in the area. The Zulus were prohibited from hunting within the borders of the game reserves and showed resistance to these conservation measures by illegally poaching within the reserves.<sup>38</sup> Shortly after, on 26 March 1898, the ZAR proclaimed its second game reserve, the Sabi Game Reserve. In 1926 this reserve became the nucleus of the renowned Kruger National Park.<sup>39</sup>

In the meantime game protection associations, like the NGPA, were formed all over South Africa. The best known of these associations were the Western Districts Game Protection Association (1886) and the South African Republic Game Protection Association (1892).<sup>40</sup> The oldest surviving environmental interest group in South Africa, the Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA), was established in October 1891 in Cape Town. Though primarily concerned with the exploration of South Africa's mountains, the MCSA also actively participated in the conservation of mountain flora, ranging from combating alien vegetation to proposing legislation and legislative changes.<sup>41</sup>

The momentum created by the conservation measures in the last decades of the nineteenth century was briefly put on hold by the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War between Britain and the two Boer republics in October 1899. The environmental toll of this war still needs to be properly investigated, but one can assume that its impact on the environment was far-reaching. The Anglo-Boer War came to an end in May 1902, with both the ZAR and the OFS losing their independence to Britain. They respectively became the Transvaal Colony and the Orange River Colony.<sup>42</sup>

- Wildlife conservation measures continued after the war, with the re-proclamation of the two existing game reserves in Transvaal. Other game reserves proclaimed after the war included the Singwitsi Game Reserve (1903) and the Rustenburg Game Reserve (1909) in Transvaal; the Namaqualand Game Reserve (1903, de-proclaimed in 1919) and the Gordonia Game Reserve (1908, de-proclaimed in 1930) in the Cape; the

<sup>38</sup> E.J. Carruthers, "National parks and game reserves, the Transvaal and Natal: protected for the people or against the people?", paper read at the 16<sup>th</sup> biennial conference of the South African Historical Society, Pretoria, 6-9.7.1997, pp. 3, 10-11.

<sup>39</sup> See Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park*, pp. 23-28 for more details.

<sup>40</sup> Pringle, p. 63; Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal...", p. 69.

<sup>41</sup> *The Mountain Club of South Africa* (pamphlet), pp. 1-4.

<sup>42</sup> T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. xv, 551-571.

Hlabisa Game Reserve (1905) and the Mkhuze Game Reserve (1912) in Natal, and the Sommerville Game Reserve (1925) in the OFS.<sup>43</sup> A number of private organisations re-emerged, most notably the Transvaal Game Protection Association (TGPA, 1902 - formerly known as the South African Republic Game Protection Association) and the Western Districts Game and Trout Protection Association (1902).<sup>44</sup> Scientific associations were also formed, like the Botanical Society in 1913 and the South African Ornithological Union (1904 - renamed the Southern African Ornithological Society in 1930).<sup>45</sup>

On an administrative level, the South Africa Act of 1909 gave the provinces the responsibility for the protection of fauna and flora. Hey notes that this responsibility was interpreted as the promulgation of conservation and protectionist legislation, the regulating of hunting and fishing, and the implementing of the bounty system of predator control.<sup>46</sup> More importantly, the South Africa Act of 1909 led to the creation of the Union of South Africa that came into existence on 31 May 1910 with Gen. Louis Botha as Prime Minister.

The alienation of black people from land followed shortly after with the promulgation of the Natives Land Act in 1913. This act regulated the purchase, ownership and occupation of land by black and white people. Scheduled areas were set aside for black people which amounted to less than 8% of the total land area of the Union. Black land ownership was confined to the scheduled areas,<sup>47</sup> though exceptions did occur.<sup>48</sup> According to Farieda Khan, in a study on black environmental perceptions, the 1913 Land Act was the most important influence that shaped black views on the environment. It transformed the positive view of the natural environment among black

<sup>43</sup> Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal...", p. 147; Carruthers, "National parks...", pp. 3, 11; Pringle, pp. 70, 74; Hey, p. 139.

<sup>44</sup> See Pringle, pp. 60-161 for more details.

<sup>45</sup> C.D. Schweizer and K.H. Cooper, "Voluntary organisations and the environment" in R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental concerns in South Africa: technical and legal perspectives*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>46</sup> Hey, p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>48</sup> See H. Feinberg, "Challenging the Natives Land Act: African land acquisitions between 1913 and 1936", paper read at the 16<sup>th</sup> biennial conference of the South African Historical Society, Pretoria, 6-9.7.1997.

people, into a generally negative attitude.<sup>49</sup> The 1913 Land Act was followed in 1936 by the Native Trust and Land Act which made a further six million hectares of land available to black people. Restrictions were placed on the purchase of land in these areas and only tribal councils and black syndicates were allowed to buy in the "native reserves".<sup>50</sup>

Important developments in flora conservation also took place in 1913. In that year South Africa's first National Botanical Garden was established on the Kirstenbosch estate in Cape Town. Because not all South African plant species could be grown at Kirstenbosch, the decision was taken to develop regional gardens that represent the ecological areas in South Africa. Eight regional gardens totalling 1 352 ha were established between 1913 and 1982 to conserve indigenous flora in South Africa.<sup>51</sup>

The mainstream environmental movement in South Africa for most of its history remained a predominantly white middle class movement in which black people were stereotyped as being the squanderers of the natural environment. This view was challenged with the establishment of the first black environmental organisation, the Native Farmers Association (NFA), in 1918. The NFA was founded by Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu and a black American missionary, Rev. J.E. East, to address the widespread environmental deterioration and poverty among rural communities in the Eastern Cape. It focused on agricultural, socio-economic and political issues, and attempted, *inter alia*, to end the discriminatory practices towards black farmers and to establish their equality with their white counterparts. Lack of land and poverty were identified by the NFA as the main causes of environmental degradation among black communities.<sup>52</sup>

The South African economy experienced its first phase of industrial development in the 1910s. Between 1865 and 1915, the economy was transformed from one with an

<sup>49</sup> F. Khan, *Contemporary South African environmental response: an historical and socio-political evaluation with particular reference to blacks* (M.A. dissertation), pp. 18-19.

<sup>50</sup> Liebenberg and Spies, p. 298.

<sup>51</sup> J.N. Eloff, "Botanic gardens and education in South Africa" in D. Bramwell *et al.* (eds), *Botanic gardens and the World Conservation Strategy*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>52</sup> Khan, *Contemporary South African...*, pp. 28-32; F. Khan, "Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu: pioneer South African environmental activist" in *African Wildlife* 46(6), 1992, p. 275; Khan, "Soil wars...", pp. 439, 441; F. Khan, *Environmentalism in a changing South Africa*, pp. 4-5.

agricultural base into a modern capitalistic economy based on the mining industry. From 1915 onwards developments in the manufacturing, commercial and service sectors sparked off industrialisation in South Africa. The state played an important role in this development, at first promoting economic liberalism, but after the electoral success of the Pact-government (a coalition between the Labour and the National Parties) in 1924, South Africa entered a new phase of economic nationalism. This entailed greater state intervention in agriculture and industries, given the fact that the Pact-government brought about a political alliance between white labour interests and white rural capital. Important landmarks in the industrial development were the creation of the Electricity Suppliers Commission (Escom) in 1923 and the South African Iron and Steel Industry Corporation (Iskor) in 1928.<sup>53</sup>

A breakthrough in the long struggle to convince the South African government to establish a national park came in 1926 with the passing of the National Parks Act (no 56 of 1926). This act provided for the creation of the National Parks Board to manage governmental conservation interests and the establishment of the Kruger National Park (KNP). The latter came into being by the consolidation of the Sabi and Singwitsi Game Reserves into one national park. A wedge occupied by the Makulele community, separated these two areas. Plans to evict the Makulele made very early in the KNP's existence, failed until 1969, when the Makulele were evicted and their land incorporated into the KNP. The first warden of the KNP was Col James Stevenson-Hamilton who had been the warden of the Sabi Game Reserve since 1902. Stevenson-Hamilton together with other interested parties, notably the TGPA, had been key figures in the struggle for a national park.<sup>54</sup>

One of South Africa's most influential environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS), the Wildlife Protection Society of South Africa, was also founded in 1926. In December 1925 the TGPA disbanded, and the same people formed the Wildlife

<sup>53</sup> Liebenberg and Spies, p. 178; D.G. Franzsen and H.J.J. Reynders (eds), *Die ekonomiese lewe van Suid-Afrika* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), pp. 158-159; J. Nattrass, *The South African economy: its growth and change* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 24-28.

<sup>54</sup> See Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park*, pp. 47-66; Carruthers, "Game protection in the Transvaal...", pp. 150-177; Carruthers, "National parks...", pp. 3-6; Pringle, pp. 85-108; M. Nel, "Kruger land claim" in *African Wildlife* 50(6), 1996, pp. 6-9.

Society on 11 March 1926 with the specific aim of protecting wildlife.<sup>55</sup> The name was later changed to the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa and again in 1996 to the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa. According to Jim Taylor this name changing reflects the evolution of its policy, focusing in the beginning on nature protection. This policy gave way to one that focused on the wise use of natural resources (as the Wildlife Society), which in turn was substituted with a wider holistic perspective on the environment that went beyond wildlife and natural resources.<sup>56</sup>

The momentum and energy created by the establishment of the KNP in 1926 carried on till the 1930s when four additional national parks were established. The Addo Elephant National Park (1931), the Bontebok National Park (1931) and the Mountain Zebra Park (1937) were created in a desperate attempt to save the Addo elephant, the bontebok and the mountain zebra of which there were left, by the 1930s, only eleven, twenty and seventeen respectively. The fourth park, the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (1931), was not born out of desperation, but to provide a home for migrating game.<sup>57</sup>

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Between 1883 and 1937 the environmental movement mainly centred on the conservation of wildlife. With the exception of the NFA, it was confined to the white middle-class, although by 1926 unity among the whites with regard to conservation was emerging. Previous divisions along class and language lines within the white community were being bridged and wildlife started to be of cultural and sentimental importance to all whites.<sup>58</sup> The black communities did not share this view. For them wildlife conservation meant being alienated from both land and their economic means of survival. An important aspect of the environmental movement in this phase was the emergence of private, non-governmental organisations concerned with the

<sup>55</sup> Pringle, p. 107. See also O. Martiny, "The Wildlife Society of Southern Africa" in Council for the Habitat, *Activities in retrospect: conference proceedings 4. Johannesburg, 9.5.1978*, pp. 57-64.

<sup>56</sup> J. Taylor, *Share-Net: a case study of environmental education resource material development in a risk society*, pp. 12-13. To prevent confusion, the commonly used term "Wildlife Society" will be used throughout this study.

<sup>57</sup> *South Africa 1989-90: official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa* (15<sup>th</sup> edition), p. 705; "The crisis parks" in *African Wildlife* 34(2), 1980, pp. 14-17; A.P.J. van Rensburg, "Die geskiedenis van die Nasionale Bontebokpark, Swellendam" in *Koedoe* 18, 1975, pp. 165-190.

<sup>58</sup> Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park*, p. 65.

conservation of the natural environment, like the Mountain Club of South Africa and the Wildlife Protection Society of South Africa.

### 3.3 From protectionism to the conservation of natural resources, 1937-1965

In 1937 G.V. Jacks and R.O. Whyte published their highly influential book, *The rape of the earth: a world survey of soil erosion*. Their chapter on soil erosion in South Africa starts off with an alarming observation: "A national catastrophe, due to soil erosion, is perhaps more imminent in the Union of South Africa than in any other country."<sup>59</sup> In their view the race against soil erosion in South Africa had become a race against time, and they warned that by the time the mines were exhausted, South Africa's soil would no longer be able to feed the white population in the country.<sup>60</sup>

This was not the first time that bad soil conservation practices in South Africa were highlighted. Two government investigations, in 1914 and 1919, launched after severe droughts, had placed emphasis on the urgent need for soil conservation. In its report the Drought Investigation Commission (1919) even warned of the danger of South Africa becoming a great uninhabitable desert.<sup>61</sup> However, the need for soil conservation in South Africa was not considered urgent after the rains came again. Several attempts were made between 1925 and 1939 to address the need for soil conservation, notably by the Soil Erosion Advisory Council (1929-1933), the launching of the Soil Schemes in 1933 and the proclaiming of the Drakensberg Conservation Area for intensive water and soil conservation studies in 1934. The first move towards establishing an effective soil conservation service within governmental structures came only in 1939 with the creation of the Division of Soil and Veld Conservation within the Department of Agriculture.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> G.V. Jacks and R.O. Whyte, *The rape of the earth: a world survey of soil erosion*, p. 264.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266-268. Jacks and Whyte were mainly concerned with the white people in South Africa, hence the reference that the soil would not be able to feed the white population group in the country.

<sup>61</sup> M.A. Rabie, "South African soil conservation legislation" in *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 7(3), November 1974, pp. 259-261; T.C. Robertson, "Ecology and political ideals" in *Veldtrust*, December 1972, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> J.C. Ross, *Soil conservation in South Africa: a review of the problem and developments to date*, pp. 15-17.

However, the outbreak of the Second World War in the same year meant that soil conservation had to be pushed aside while the government attended to other matters. None the less, important events did occur during the war period, including the passing of the Forest and Veld Conservation Act (no 13 of 1941) which was the first legislative attempt to address soil erosion and related problems. It was followed in 1946 by the promulgation of the Soil Conservation Act (no 45 of 1946) which allowed for the creation of a new Division of Soil Conservation and Extension to administer the act.<sup>63</sup>

Public concern for soil degradation also led to the founding of the National Veld Trust (NVT) on 18 March 1943 in Cape Town. The aim of the NVT was to promote soil and water conservation, and to educate the general public on the need of the state to act in this regard. Partly funded by the government, the NVT played a key educational role and remained the most influential ENGO in soil conservation for decades.<sup>64</sup>

Soil conservation was also addressed within the Southern Africa region in 1948 with the convening of an Inter-African Conference in Goma, in the Belgian Congo (today the Democratic Republic of Congo), to discuss soil conservation and land utilisation. This conference led to the establishment of the Southern African Regional Commission for the Conservation and Utilisation of the Soil (SARCUS). SARCUS's main functions were to focus attention on the problems involved in the conservation and utilisation of natural resources, and to provide mechanisms for the exchange of information to successfully address these problems. Member states of SARCUS included Angola, Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Nyasaland (Malawi), Mozambique, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), South Africa and South West Africa (Namibia), and Swaziland.<sup>65</sup>

Between 1940 and 1948 important environmental legislation was passed including the Sea Fisheries Act (no 10 of 1940), the Advertising on Roads and Ribbon Development Act (no 21 of 1940), the Forest Act (no 13 of 1941), the Natural

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>64</sup> Robertson, pp. 9-10; R.J. van Niekerk, *Bewaring as sedelike prinsipe in die Suid-Afrikaanse bodembenuutingsituasie: 'n kultuur-filosofiese studie* (D.Phil thesis), p. 55.

<sup>65</sup> Rabie, "South African soil conservation legislation", p. 290.



Resources Development Act (no 51 of 1947), the Fertilisers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act (no 36 of 1947) and the Atomic Energy Act (no 35 of 1948). All these acts provided for greater government control over the conservation of natural resources and the combating of pollution.<sup>66</sup>

In the meantime the ruling United Party (UP), under the leadership of Gen. J.C. Smuts, and the opposition National Party (NP), under Dr D.F. Malan, were fighting a highly politicised battle over the proposed Dongola Wild Life Sanctuary. The proposal, first tabled in 1944, met serious resistance from the NP, mainly because it threatened white land-owning interests in the area. Despite this resistance, the Smuts government went ahead and proclaimed the Dongola Wild Life Sanctuary on 28 March 1947 (act no 6 of 1947). After the NP came to power in 1948, immediate steps were taken to abolish this national park. The Dongola Wild Life Sanctuary Repeal Act (no 29 of 1949) was passed in 1949 and the land on which it was situated was either given back to its original owners or allocated for settlement.<sup>67</sup>

After the NP came to power in 1948, government attention was mainly focused on implementing the proposed domestic policy of apartheid which helped the NP to power. Acts to legally enforce racial segregation followed shortly after, such as the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), the Population Registration Act (1950), the Group Areas Act (1950), the Separate Amenities Act (1953), the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act (1953), the Bantu Education Act (1953), and the Industrial Conciliation Act (1956). The process of political exclusion of black, Indian and coloured South Africans that started in 1910 culminated in 1956 in the removal of coloured voters from the common voters' roll. These groups reacted to this and other racist policies by launching a passive resistance campaign in the 1950s with civil disobedience being high on the priority list of the African National Congress (ANC).

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<sup>66</sup> R.F. Fuggle, "An overview of lessons that can be learned from efforts to protect the South African environment" in *National Veld Trust jubilee conference proceedings, Pretoria, 2 to 4 November 1993*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>67</sup> See E.J. Carruthers, "The Dongola Wild Life Sanctuary: 'psychological blunder, economic folly and political monstrosity' or 'more valuable than rubies and gold'?" in *Kleio* 24, 1992, pp. 82-100, and Carruthers, "National parks...", pp. 6-8 for more details.

This campaign was aimed at the South African government and showed that the new direction they had taken was not acceptable to the majority of the population.<sup>68</sup>

During this period of political uncertainty for black people, the second black ENGO, the African National Soil Conservation Association (ANSCA) was founded. The first suggestion to launch ANSCA came from the NVT which felt that, since membership to the NVT was limited to whites only, a separate organisation should be started for black people. ANSCA was launched on 26 September 1953 with Sam Motsuenyane as organising secretary and W.B. Ngakane as president. According to Khan, ANSCA's main aim was to convince black farmers to combat soil erosion through the adoption of sound agricultural methods. In 1957 the Department of Bantu Administration and Development instructed ANSCA to disband and to re-organise along ethnic lines in order to fit in with governmental racial policies. Rather than comply with this request, ANSCA disbanded, and despite efforts to continue with its work, by 1960 it had completely collapsed.<sup>69</sup>

Regional and city planning also started to receive proper attention in the 1940s and 1950s. Prior to that, determining which land should be used for mining, farming, manufacturing, residential areas, etc., depended on which sector would be the most profitable. After 1942 the South African government opted to implement regulations in order to decentralise the industrial concentration in only four big centres to the rural areas and especially to those areas close to the black reserves (called border industries).<sup>70</sup>

The most important regional planning commission was the Commission for the Socio-economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa, appointed in 1949 and headed by Prof. F.R. Tomlinson. The report of the Tomlinson Commission emphasised the need for economic development in the black reserves if

<sup>68</sup> T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From protest to challenge. A documentary history of African politics in South Africa, 1882-1964* 2: *Hope and challenge, 1935-1952*, pp. 403-428; Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 321-345, 376-378.

<sup>69</sup> Khan, "Soil wars...", pp. 439-459; Khan, *Contemporary South African...*, pp. 33-39; Khan, *Environmentalism...*, pp. 5-6; "It was a tragedy this black movement died" in *African Wildlife* 29(3), 1975, p. 20; "ANSCA's ambition" in *Veldtrust*, November 1954, pp. 12-13; "First ANSCA congress" in *Veldtrust*, November 1953, pp. 27-29.

<sup>70</sup> I. Botha, *'n Teoretiese en historiese oorsig van streekbeplanning in Suid-Afrika, met riglyne vir 'n toekomstige beleid* (M.Sc. dissertation), pp. 40-45.

the NP's goal of separate development were to be realised. It stressed the fact that only when black people had work opportunities in or close to the reserves would the flow of black people to the industrial areas be curbed. The Commission concluded that South Africa had to choose between racial integration and racial segregation; if racial segregation was opted for, the reserves needed to be developed.<sup>71</sup>

The government opted for racial segregation, especially after Dr H.F. Verwoerd became Prime Minister in 1958. Often labelled the "architect of apartheid", Verwoerd introduced a master plan for the division of South Africa in white and black areas in 1959. The Bantustan policy led to the creation of ethnic Bantustans (later called homelands) scattered throughout South Africa. The collapse of black resistance after the events at Sharpeville and Langa (1960) and the Rivonia Trial (1964), which deprived black people of their resistance leaders, and South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth and the creation of the Republic of South Africa (1961), all contributed towards enabling the government to push through its Bantustan policy with little resistance.<sup>72</sup> Regional and city planning in South Africa was thus not driven by the need to take the environmental impact of human activities into account; rather, it was the product of political policies aimed at carving South Africa up along ethnic lines with little consideration of the environment and the majority of the population in the country.

In the same year Verwoerd tabled his grand plan for apartheid, the first environmental co-operative body, the South African Nature Union (SANU) was established. The aim of SANU was to consolidate the resources and to provide a unified forum of all environmentally orientated groups in South Africa. Established in 1959, SANU continued to exist till 1974 when the Habitat Council replaced it.<sup>73</sup> In 1963 two important ENGOs were created, namely the Wilderness Leadership School and the African Wildlife Society (AWS). The former concentrated on environmental education, pioneering the wilderness experience in the country. The AWS, on the other hand, was an attempt to involve black people in conservation. Established by the

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46; A. Wessels and M.E. Wentzel, *Die invloed van relevante kommissieverslae sedert Uniewording op regeringsbeleid ten opsigte van swart verstedeliking en streekontwikkeling* (Institute for Historical Research report IGN-T1), pp. 134-153.

<sup>72</sup> T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, pp. 201-226; Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 355-398.

<sup>73</sup> Schweizer and Cooper, p. 136.

Natal chapter of the Wildlife Society for black people in Natal, it collapsed after only two years without really stimulating black participation in environmental issues.<sup>74</sup>

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Between 1937 and 1965 the conservation of natural resources dominated the environmental scene in South Africa. Newly introduced conservation measures by the government were not aimed at protecting the environment, but rather focused on protecting the economic interests of the industries and the state. ENGO activity revolved mainly around the conservation of fauna and flora with notable exceptions being the NVT which actively promoted soil conservation practices among the farming community in the country.

### 3.4 The environmental revolution, 1965-1972

In a study on environmental and related interest groups in South Africa, C.D. Schweizer marks 1965 as the year in which the environmental revolution "arrived" in the country. (See section 2.1 for the global environmental revolution.) This conclusion is based on the fact that between 1965 and 1970 fifteen ENGOs were established in South Africa.<sup>75</sup> In Part 2 of her study she lists eighteen ENGOs established between 1965 and 1972, as opposed to the three between 1961 and 1965, nine between 1951 and 1960, seven between 1946 and 1950, and 25 between 1901 and 1945.<sup>76</sup>

Though her list is incomplete at times, fact remains that by 1965 the general public was increasingly becoming more active in environmental matters. However, in no way did it generate the same amount of interest as in the USA and Western Europe. As seen in section 2.6, the environmental revolution led directly to the creation of ENGOs with political agendas that addressed a wider range of subjects than their conservation predecessors. In South Africa there is no group, founded between 1965

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<sup>74</sup> Khan, *Contemporary South African...*, pp. 40-41; C.D. Schweizer, *Environmental and related interest groups in South Africa 2* (M.Sc. dissertation), p. 54.

<sup>75</sup> Schweizer, *1*, pp. 62-63, 75.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, pp. 3-59.

and 1972, that can claim to be of the same sort as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.<sup>77</sup>

Radical environmentalism had not yet arrived in South Africa, and the overwhelming majority of new ENGOs had some sort of conservation agenda. This ranged from co-ordination (e.g. the Co-ordinating Council for Nature Protection in the Cape, 1970), environmental management (e.g. the South African Wildlife Management Association, 1970) or good old fashioned nature conservation (e.g. the Southern African Nature Foundation, 1968). Important newcomers to the environmental scene were the anti-pollution groups like the Clean Cape Association (1966), the National Association for Clean Air (1969) and Keep South Africa Tidy (1971).<sup>78</sup> Most of the ENGOs were established to address a single issue, like litter, air pollution and nature conservation. An holistic approach to the environment within a single ENGO, which characterised the environmental revolution elsewhere, was initially limited to the Society for the Protection of the Environment (SPE). Established in 1971, the SPE addressed a variety of issues ranging from environmental maring to proposed developments and unchecked population growth.<sup>79</sup>

Of particular importance to the environmental movement was the establishment of the Southern African Nature Foundation (SANF) by Dr Anton Rupert in 1968. As the branch of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Southern Africa, the SANF set out to assist in nature conservation, environmental education and fundraising to finance urgent projects. Unlike other WWF branches, the SANF's membership was limited to corporations only. This was due to restrictions placed on the organisation by the South African government. The government further refused to allow the transfer of money from the SANF to the WWF international headquarters, as was required by the WWF of all its branches across the world.<sup>80</sup>

The environment also received renewed attention from the South African academic community from 1968 onwards. In 1968, the Faculty of Forestry at the University of

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<sup>77</sup> See also *ibid.*, 1, p. 81.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-82.

<sup>79</sup> *Society for the Protection of the Environment Newsletter* 1(1)-1(4), 1971.

<sup>80</sup> Interview: I. McDonald, Stellenbosch, 1.4.1998.

Stellenbosch introduced a course in nature conservation for the first time, which was followed by the establishment of chairs in nature conservation at the same institution and at the University of Pretoria (the Eugene Marais Chair) in 1970. In 1972, the University of Cape Town (UCT) established the School of Environmental Studies and, with the financial assistance of the multi-national Shell oil company, the Shell Chair of Environmental Studies was instituted. These initiatives were followed in 1973 by the establishment of an Institute of Fresh Water Studies at Rhodes University, an Ecological Institute at the University of the Orange Free State, and the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute for African Ornithology at UCT. Members of the professional planning disciplines also started to show greater sensitivity towards the environmental impact of their work, and founded a co-ordinating body, the Environmental Planning Professions Interdisciplinary Committee (EPPIC) in 1974. The specific aim of EPPIC was the promotion of environmental impact assessments among its members.<sup>81</sup>

Despite political distractions in the Southern Africa region and in the international political arena, the government also started to display greater sensitivity towards the environment. Important anti water pollution legislation (the Water Act no 54 of 1956) was followed by the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act (no 45 of 1965). An important provision of the latter was that air polluters had to prove that they had adopted the best practical means to control their pollution. In terms of the act, the "best practical means" were seen as measures that were technically feasible and economically viable. The government retained the "best practical means" criterion into the 1990s, ignoring the shift towards the "polluter pays" concept that had been in force in most industrialised countries since the 1970s.<sup>82</sup> Other important environmental legislation adopted included the Physical Planning and Utilisation of Resources Act (no 88 of 1967), the Forest Act (no 72 of 1968), the Soil Conservation Act (no 76 of 1969), the Mountain Catchment Areas Act (no 63 of 1970) and the Prevention and Combating of Pollution of the Sea by Oil Act (no 67 of 1971).<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> M.A. Rabie and R.F. Fuggle, "The rise of environmental concern" in Fuggle and Rabie (eds), *Environmental management in South Africa*, pp. 18-19; Schweizer and Cooper, p. 139; "Richard Fuggle is doing something quite new..." in *African Wildlife* 28(3), 1974, pp. 26-27; R. Bigalke, "Nature conservation education at the University of Stellenbosch" in *African Wildlife* 26(1), 1972, p. 36.

<sup>82</sup> See M.A. Rabie, *South African environmental legislation*, pp. 93-108 for air pollution control in South Africa prior to 1976.

<sup>83</sup> *South Africa 1978: official yearbook of the Republic of South Africa* (5<sup>th</sup> edition), pp. 339-352.

In the absence of television to bring the environmental crisis into people's homes, the environmental revolution passed by largely unnoticed by the general public. The Cleaner Air, Rivers and Environment (CARE) campaign launched by *The Star* on 10 March 1971 changed environmental reporting in South Africa and played an important role in educating the general public in South Africa on environmental problems. Headed by James Clarke, CARE set out to expose pollution, indifference towards the country's conservation needs, poor town planning and all abuses of the South African environment.<sup>84</sup> Articles were published on pollution, soil erosion, diminishing wildlife, the population explosion, the misuse of land, the lack of country and town planning, and the overexploitation of natural resources. *The Star's* readers were also informed on how to run green households, while numerous initiatives were taken to directly involve the public in environmental actions.<sup>85</sup>

CARE was instrumental in exposing the real state of the South African environment. Of particular concern to the campaign was the high pollution levels in the country, and they informed their readers that the air in Johannesburg and Pretoria in 1971 was so polluted that to inhale it equalled smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Many state and parastatal industries such as Iscor and Escom were identified as major air polluters in the country, while particular attention was paid to the South African Railways (SAR) whose 2 473 steam locomotives caused serious air pollution throughout the country. With the SAR being the only organisation allowed to cause smoke in smokeless zones, no pollution expert or state department was willing to speak out against the railways industry.<sup>86</sup>

South Africa also had problems with water pollution with, for example, the Vaal River being so polluted by industrial effluent that the water below the Vaal Triangle was not fit even for industrial use.<sup>87</sup> In 1970 and 1971 water at the Vereeniging purification and pumping station of the Rand Water Board, was unsuitable for

<sup>84</sup> *The Star*, 10.3.1971, p.1; J. Clarke, *Our fragile land: South Africa's environmental crisis*, pp. 11-16; Interview: James Clarke, Johannesburg, 5.3.1998.

<sup>85</sup> M. Cottee, "CARE: one of the most successful newspaper campaigns conducted in South Africa" in *African Wildlife* 26(2), 1972, pp. 62-63.

<sup>86</sup> *The Star*, 10-31.3.1971.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

purification treatment on 151 and 102 days of the year respectively. Industrial effluent also polluted water resources in Natal, the Eastern and Western Cape, while poor farming methods resulted in topsoil loss which in turn silted up the river networks of the country.<sup>88</sup>

South Africa's environmental problems were not confined to pollution only. The over-exploitation of fish resources in the country's territorial waters had become a problem by 1971. The pilchard resources, for example, had declined to such an extent that only 300 000 tons were caught in 1971. This was down from 1 500 000 tons caught in 1968. Improved fishing techniques, larger fishing fleets, lack of government control and pollution at sea were identified as the main problems.<sup>89</sup> But the country needed more fish and more food to feed the fast growing population. With an average annual growth rate of 3,09%, by 1970 South Africa had a population of 21,8 million, 7 873 000 of whom lived in the four metropolitan areas<sup>90</sup> in the country.<sup>91</sup>

The state of the environment did not go by unnoticed by the ENGOS in the country. In 1971 the first national environmental conference, "Man and his environment", was hosted by the NVT, the SPE and SANU to address the environmental degradation in South Africa. At the conference, held on 21 and 22 October 1971 at Stellenbosch, the 350 delegates dealt mainly with pollution, focusing on all the various types that posed environmental problems for South Africa. "Man and his environment" was, like the founding of the first ENGO in 1883, an historic event, for it was the first time that government departments, local authorities, universities, conservation bodies, ENGOS, agricultural unions and industries got together to discuss the environmental crisis in South Africa.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> R.J. Laburn, "Pollution of water" in *Habitat RSA*, pp. 39-43.

<sup>89</sup> J.P.A. Lochner, "The exploitation of marine resources" in *Habitat RSA*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>90</sup> The Cape Peninsula, Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage, Durban/Pinetown and the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging areas.

<sup>91</sup> J.M. Calitz, *Southern African population: a regional profile, 1970-1990*, pp. 2, 6, 8-9.

<sup>92</sup> *Habitat RSA*, pp. 3, 140.



Between 1965 and 1972 the environmental movement gradually started to move away from the conservation of natural resources, fauna and flora to address some of the problems of an industrial society. That the country had environmental problems was widely acknowledged; however, the extent of these problems was open to much dispute. The government was not willing to admit to a crisis situation while ENGOS such as the SPE and *The Star's* CARE campaign were widely propagating the existence of an environmental crisis in the country.

Despite increasing attention being paid to pollution between 1965 and 1972, the South African environmental movement still remained focused predominantly on the conservation of fauna and flora. However, by 1972, as a direct result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), a new dimension was added to the focus areas of South African environmentalism, which redirected the movement towards a re-evaluation of the official administration of environmental affairs in the country.

## CHAPTER 4

### ENVIRONMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1972-1982

The main focus of this study starts in June 1972 with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) that was held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972. UNCHE was, back in 1972, the most important international conference on the environment ever held<sup>1</sup> because it succeeded in bringing together, for the first time, heads of state of the world, and not just natural scientists as at previous environment-related conferences, to consider the tremendous impact humankind has on the environment. Within the South African context, UNCHE was important for it highlighted the uncoordinated nature of the official administration of environmental affairs by the South African government. UNCHE further led to the global institutionalisation of environmental affairs, which became an important external pressure on the South African government to reconsider its activities which impacted negatively on the environment.

The period 1972 to 1982 in South Africa was dominated by governmental response to the environmental revolution and the perceived environmental crisis. The South African government, despite pressure by the opposition parties, was slow to react to the growing concern within the country concerning the environment. It seems as though the government would have been perfectly happy to continue along the conventional lines of fauna, flora and natural resource conservation (see sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). However, growing public concern about pollution and the general deterioration of the South African environment, coupled with the global institutionalisation of environmental affairs, forced the government to start paying constructive attention to the environment. This "constructive attention" reached its height with the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 100) in 1982.

This does not imply that the environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) were dormant between 1972 and 1982. In fact ENGO activity increased from the boost it had received between 1965 and 1972 with the founding of 49 ENGOS in the period.

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later, in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development took away the status of UNCHE as the most important environmental conference in history.

Important ENGOs like the Habitat Council (1974), the Dolphin Action and Protection Group (1977) and the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (1977) were founded, while already existing groups continued their work in the environmental field. However, despite important ENGO activities, the South African government played a directional role in the movement until 1982 by determining and extending the limits within which ENGOs and the government were allowed to function.

#### **4.1 South Africa's participation at UNCHE**

South Africa's planned attendance of UNCHE generated very little interest before the actual event. It came up only twice in the House of Assembly on 20 March and 5 May 1972 when the Minister of Planning, Mr J.J. Loots, had to answer a couple of questions regarding the event. With no environment minister and no department of environmental affairs, the Prime Minister entrusted the Department of Planning with the responsibility of representing South Africa at UNCHE. Dr P.S. Rautenbach, the Secretary of Planning, led the delegation and it included three other government officials stationed in Europe.<sup>2</sup> Rautenbach was not the most informed person on the environment and had to be briefed by James Clarke, environment reporter for *The Star* at the time, on environmental issues before boarding the aeroplane to Stockholm.<sup>3</sup>

The South African delegation viewed their role at UNCHE as that of being observers, mainly because the country was not involved in any of the preparatory work for the conference. Conflict between the developed and developing countries dominated the discussions at UNCHE and Rautenbach believed that South Africa could play a valuable role in bridging the gap between the two opposing sides. This was not an easy task given the fact that many developing nations spoke out strongly against apartheid and demanded the condemnation of racial discrimination in the Declaration on the Human Environment. Rautenbach and the rest of the delegation ignored attacks

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<sup>2</sup> *Debates of the House of Assembly: questions and replies*, 17.3.1972, Question 378, col. 616 and 5.5.1972, Question 25, col. 976.

<sup>3</sup> Interview: J. Clarke, Johannesburg, 5.3.1998.

on South Africa and apartheid for they held the opinion that they were in Stockholm to talk about the environment and not politics.<sup>4</sup>

The demands of the developing countries prevailed and the 26 principles of the draft Declaration on the Human Environment included one (principle 1) that condemned all policies promoting apartheid, racial discrimination and any form of colonialism. The South African delegation was strongly against the new draft of principle 1 and went on record that it had entered a reservation on UNCHE's competence to include the new draft principle in the Declaration. They felt that it constituted interference in the domestic affairs of a member state of the United Nations (UN), which was against the Charter of the organisation. Apart from that, South Africa supported the Declaration as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

One of the telltale signs of ambiguities in South Africa's conservation policy (and record) was the fact that it opposed a call for a total ban on commercial whaling. With no official legislation to protect whales and being the third largest whaling nation in the world, South Africa, together with Portugal, supported the suggestion from Japan that a moratorium be placed only on the catching of those species in danger of becoming extinct. The South African delegate, Julian Thomas (Agricultural Attaché to Paris), considered a total ban on commercial whaling unnecessarily harsh and based on insufficient scientific evidence. The belief was held that a controlled utilisation of whale resources was both possible and reasonable.<sup>6</sup>

It appears as though the South African delegation reached the goal they set for themselves, namely merely to be observers at UNCHE. From the official UN report it is very clear that the delegation participated in few of the discussions and only reacted when their country's domestic policy of apartheid came under attack and when its economic interests were threatened, as in the case of commercial whaling.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Star*, 5.6.1972, pp. 7, 23; 6.6.1972, p. 9; 7.6.1972, p. 9; *The Daily News*, 5.6.1972, p. 11; *Die Burger*, 5.6.1972, p. 3; *Rand Daily Mail*, 5.6.1972, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, "Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972", <[gopher://unepq.unep.org/00/un/unep/govcoun/decision/1972stoc/gc1972.text](http://gopher://unepq.unep.org/00/un/unep/govcoun/decision/1972stoc/gc1972.text)>, 1973, Declaration on the Human Environment, principle 1, par. 322.

<sup>6</sup> *The Star*, 10.6.1972, p. 3.

UNCHE generated little interest in the South African media with only *The Star* and the *Rand Daily Mail* affording ongoing coverage of the then "biggest and most important conference on man's environment" as the *Rand Daily Mail* called it.<sup>7</sup> The media is not entirely to blame for this lack of coverage; important events took place in South Africa in the month of June 1972 which took up the attention of the government and space in the printed media, namely the student riots at English universities aimed at the government and the harsh treatment of the protesters by the police; an explosion at a coal mine in Wankie, Rhodesia which trapped 468 mineworkers; the Organisation for African Unity's annual summit; a bus disaster in the Western Cape which left 59 dead, and a burst in the Durban-Johannesburg oil pipeline at Bellair. All these events contributed towards making June 1972 an eventful month in which there was hardly time for environmental concerns.<sup>8</sup>

One of the most important outcomes of UNCHE was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). South Africa was not invited to become a member of the Governing Council of this programme, and though it attended the first meeting held in Geneva in June 1973, it played no active part in UNEP thereafter. Despite limited participation in UNCHE, the conference was very important within the South African context. According to Rautenbach it brought order to the concept of environmental conservation in so far as it highlighted the uncoordinated nature of conservation efforts in many countries including South Africa. It produced a definite environmental policy (which South Africa lacked at the time) and a basis for action and technical co-operation on all levels. UNCHE also generated renewed interest and enthusiasm for environmental issues.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 5.6.1972, p. 5. See also *The Star*, 5-17.6.1972; *Rand Daily Mail*, 5-17.6.1972.

<sup>8</sup> See *The Star*, 5-17.6.1972; *Rand Daily Mail*, 5-17.6.1972; *The Daily News*, 5-17.6.1972; *Die Burger*, 5-17, 6.1972; *The Pretoria News*, 5-17.6.1972; *Die Transvaler*, 5-17.5.1972.

<sup>9</sup> P.S. Rautenbach, "The international status of environmental conservation" in *Proceedings of the international symposium on planning for environmental conservation*, 4-6.9.1973, pp. 8-9. See also J. Wiley, *Suid-Afrika se rol en betrokkenheid by internasionale omgewingsbewaring* (C.R. Swart Lecture 19, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, 5.9.1986), pp. 4-5.

## 4.2 The struggle for the establishment of a department of the environment and its role thereafter

In the first half of the 1970s, governments world-wide in general addressed the growing environmental concern among their citizens in two ways: firstly, by strengthening existing environment-related laws and by adopting broad-ranging new ones; and secondly, by creating a centralised Department of the Environment to co-ordinate government environment-related activities and to act as a kind of watchdog over both the public and the state. Britain led the way and created the first Department of the Environment in the world in November 1970. By 1972 Canada, the Netherlands, the United States of America (USA) and Australia had followed suit, while other countries acted in the same manner shortly after.<sup>10</sup>

The South African government was slow to react to the trend among governments to give the environment a specific place within the broad governmental structure. Calls for a separate department dealing with environmental matters were not entirely new to South Africa. Back in 1950 when the organisational structure of the country's Soil Conservation Services came under attack, the National Veld Trust (NVT) started calling for an independent authority in the form of a ministry of conservation to deal with what it regarded as a crisis situation. The main reason behind this request was the poor state of the soil in the Union of South Africa.<sup>11</sup> Twenty years later, high levels of pollution in the Republic of South Africa once again prompted groups to begin requesting a separate state department for the environment.

### 4.2.1 The role of the United Party

After the Department of Planning and the Environment came into existence in 1973, the ruling National Party (NP) was proud and quick to highlight all the initiatives they had taken since 1971 with regard to environmental conservation. Truth is, the real

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Planning and the Environment, *Pollution 1971: report by the Pollution Subsidiary Committee of the Prime Minister's Planning Advisory Council*, pp. 167-185; *Debates of the House of Assembly*, 2.3.1973, col. 1865-1866; J. McCormick, *The global environmental movement: reclaiming paradise*, p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> "A ministry of conservation?" in *Veldtrust*, September 1950, pp. 11, 29.

instigators of change in the administration of environmental affairs in South Africa was the Official Opposition in the House of Assembly, i.e. the United Party (UP), and not members of the NP.

Led in particular by E.G. Malan and D.E. Mitchell, the UP in 1970 requested the Prime Minister, Adv. B.J. Vorster, to create a separate environment department headed by its own minister. This request was turned down and the UP made a similar request a year later on 26 March 1971. On that date Malan, in a private motion before the House of Assembly, asked the government to pay increasing attention at the highest governmental levels to environmental issues. Malan also informed the meeting that the UP had, in their official policy, accepted the need for a ministry of environmental affairs in South Africa and they called upon the government to act positively in this regard.<sup>12</sup>

The gist of the UP's argument on 26 March 1971 and in subsequent discussions in the course of 1972 was that South Africa needed a central ministry with executive powers to deal with the environment. The party held the view that too many departments and state bodies were involved with the environment, and that this situation resulted in a lack of co-ordination, which weakened the overall effectiveness of the state's conservation efforts. The government, on the other hand, believed that the existing administrative efforts to conserve the environment were more than adequate. Nearly all state departments were directly or indirectly involved in environmental issues, while the Department of Planning dealt with those issues that did not belong in any particular department. The government also held the view that it had done a great deal to conserve the natural environment and that it should rather be congratulated on its achievements than be asked to reconsider the way it administered the natural environment.<sup>13</sup>

While the government was not willing to create an independent environment department, it did show its willingness to investigate the state of pollution in South Africa. The appointment of a Cabinet Committee, consisting of the Ministers of

<sup>12</sup> *Debates of the House of Assembly*, 26.3.1971, col. 3727-3736.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 3736-3772 and 11.2.1972, col. 844-892.

Health, of Economic Affairs, of Water Affairs and of Planning, to consider the question of pollution was announced on 27 January 1971. At the discussions of 26 March 1971, the NP proposed the appointment of a specialised committee to investigate pollution. The official decision in this regard was taken on 20 April 1971 when the Cabinet Committee resolved to establish the Pollution Subsidiary Committee of the Prime Minister's Planning Advisory Council. In 1972 this committee produced a comprehensive report, *Pollution 1971*, in which the state of water, air, marine, noise, electronic, radio-active and radiation pollution, and environmental contamination and marring in South Africa were dealt with. A summarised and popular version of this document appeared under the title *Pollution in South Africa*.<sup>14</sup>

An important outcome of the Pollution Subsidiary Committee's report was the establishment of a permanent Cabinet Committee on Environmental Conservation on 29 May 1972. The committee was chaired by the Minister of Planning and included the Ministers of Transport, of Economic Affairs, of Water Affairs, of Agriculture and of Health. It was entrusted with the overall co-ordination of environmental conservation in South Africa. An advisory South African Committee on Environmental Conservation, consisting of representatives of the government departments concerned, the provincial administrations, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and other parastatal bodies, was also created. The tasks of the advisory committee were to advise the Cabinet Committee, to review existing legislation and to deal with all aspects of environmental conservation.<sup>15</sup> This non-statutory committee was renamed the Council for the Environment in 1975 and was, according to Richard Fuggle, Shell Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT), not very effective, mainly because of the number of civil servants on the Council and its non-statutory status. It was replaced in 1982 by a

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Planning and the Environment, *Pollution 1971*, pp. xxi-xxvi, 1-167; *Debates of the House of Assembly*, 26.3.1971, col. 3737-3738.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Planning and the Environment, *Environmental conservation*, p. 8.



statutory Council for the Environment (version 2) which became an important role-player in the 1980s.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The creation of a department of the environment

The aspirations of those parties and individuals that longed for an independent ministry of the environment headed by its own minister, were partially met in 1973. In his opening address to the House of Assembly, the State President (Dr N.J. Diedericks), announced that the Minister of Planning would henceforth be known as the Minister of Planning and the Environment. The Department of Planning was accordingly renamed the Department of Planning and the Environment.<sup>17</sup>

Though nowhere explicitly stated as such, it seems as though UNCHE was the decisive factor that finally prompted the government to officially entrust a specific department with the important role of co-ordinating environmental efforts in the country. In September 1973, Rautenbach, the head of the South African delegation to UNCHE, emphasised the role UNCHE had played in bringing order to the administration of environmental affairs by highlighting the uncoordinated nature of actions. The UP also tried its best to bring this to the attention of the government prior to UNCHE, but the latter refused to acknowledge it at the time.<sup>18</sup>

The newly established Department of Planning and the Environment meant little more than the creation of an official department to co-ordinate environmental efforts. The stated functions of this department included "(a) [the] application of sound principles of environmental protection in physical planning at the national level; (b) co-ordinating, on a national scale, the gathering and dissemination of information on aspects of the environment; (c) co-ordinating of all actions at national level aimed at

<sup>16</sup> Interview: R.F. Fuggle, Cape Town, 26.3.1998; J.G.S. Malan, M.A. Rabie and R.F. Fuggle, "Official administration of environmental affairs" in R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental concerns in South Africa: technical and legal perspectives*, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> *Debates of the House of Assembly*, 2.3.1973, col. 1827.

<sup>18</sup> Rautenbach, "The international status...", pp. 8-9. See *Debates of the House of Assembly*, 2.3.1973, col. 1823-1868 for renewed requests by the UP for the establishment of a centralised environment department.

environmental conservation; [and] (d) providing a secretariat for the South African Committee on Environmental Conservation".<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the above-mentioned functions given to the Department of Planning and the Environment, environmental affairs in South Africa remained fragmented. A total of twelve state departments, the provincial and local authorities, and six state and parastatal bodies were involved in either the enforcement of environmental legislation or environment-related research. Pollution control alone was carried out by no fewer than nine government departments, namely the Departments of Labour, of Bantu Administration and Development, of Health, of Agricultural Technical Services, of Mines, of Industries, of Transport, of Water Affairs, and the South African Railways and Harbours.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4.2.3 The changing face of the department of the environment

At first the government believed that the natural home of the overall co-ordination of environmental affairs was within the Department of Planning. The opinion was held that the enhancement of the South African environment could only be achieved if all planning actions were environmentally sound and purposeful.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently the Department of Planning and the Environment was "created" in 1973. It remained as such until 1979 when it became the Department of Environmental Planning and Energy. The latter was short-lived and on 1 March 1980, the environmental branch of the Department of Environmental Planning and Energy was transferred to the Department of Forestry. The name of the department was changed accordingly to the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation.<sup>22</sup>

The life of the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation was even shorter and on 1 April 1980 the Department of Water Affairs, Forestry and

<sup>19</sup> Department of Planning and the Environment, *Environmental conservation*, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> J.J. le Grange, "The national status of environmental conservation" in *Proceedings of the international symposium, planning for environmental conservation*, 4-6.9.1973, pp. 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> P.S. Rautenbach, "Toespraak oor omgewingsbewaring voor die Vereniging vir die Beskerming van die Omgewing, Pretoria, 18 Oktober 1972" in *Society for the Protection of the Environment Newsletter* 2(4), 1972, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> Malan, Rabie and Fuggle, p. 115.

Environmental Conservation was created. The amalgamation of Water Affairs with the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation was the result of two processes. The first was the rationalisation process of the civil service which the Prime Minister, P.W. Botha, began in 1980. The aim of this rationalisation was to reduce the number of state departments in order to streamline the civil service.<sup>23</sup>

More importantly, the amalgamation of the two departments signalled a change in government policy towards fragmentation of environment-related actions in the Republic. By 1980 it had become increasingly evident that the various committees and state bodies instituted to co-ordinate environmental affairs between the different role-players, were struggling to fulfil their tasks. Their work, like that of the Council of the Environment (version 1), was seriously hampered by the fact that they did not have any executive powers to enforce decisions or policies. The fragmented approach to environmental administration, which the government followed between 1972 and 1982, also meant a lack of unity of action with some departments appearing more willing than others to enforce legislation entrusted to them.<sup>24</sup>

The need for a more centralised administration of all environment-related actions was addressed in the White Paper on a National Policy Regarding Environmental Conservation in 1980. The White Paper propagated a strong department of Water Affairs, Forestry and Environmental Conservation with two main responsibilities: firstly, it had to be responsible for broad-ranging environmental policy (which South Africa still lacked at the time), and secondly, it had to co-ordinate all environmental conservation activities with the help of statutory representative bodies.<sup>25</sup> A White Paper has no legal binding and these aims were only realised in 1982 with the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*; *Suid-Afrika 1980/1: amptelike jaarboek van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), pp. 138-139; G.F. Barkhuizen, *Die administrasie van omgewingsbewaring in die Republiek van Suid-Afrika* (D.Admin. thesis), p. 181.

<sup>24</sup> Barkhuizen, pp. 298-304.

<sup>25</sup> Departement van Waterwese, Bosbou en Omgewingsbewaring, *Witskrif oor 'n nasionale beleid insake omgewingsbewaring* (W.P.O - '80), p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Malan, Rabie and Fuggle, p. 116.

The functions of the Department of Water Affairs, Forestry and Environmental Conservation were to ensure the availability of enough water of an acceptable quality for all necessary purposes, to administer the wood industry, to protect the living environment and to create a balance between environmental conservation and development. Despite its name, some sections within the Department were more equal than others. It was divided into three directorates, namely of Administration, of Forestry, and of Water Affairs. Environmental Conservation was but a branch of the Directorate of Forestry. The name of the Department was changed to the Department of Environment Affairs in 1982 but it still retained all its functions, responsibilities and organisational structure.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4.3 Environmental legislation in South Africa**

Changes in humankind's perception of the natural environment also found expression in environmental legislation. Prior to 1970, industrial development necessitated the control of air and water quality through legislation, while laws to ensure the optimal utilisation of natural resources were also passed. These laws were anthropocentric in nature and were aimed at the protection of human health and economic activities. It stemmed from the prevailing belief that nature itself was an infinite resource that could be utilised in any way humans saw fit. The environmental revolution shattered this belief. An important outcome was that governments, now dealing with a finite nature, had to re-evaluate the kind of legislative protection they afforded the natural environment. The USA led the way in 1970 with the promulgation of the comprehensive National Environmental Policy Act and other developed countries soon followed suit.<sup>28</sup>

##### **4.3.1 General environmental legislation**

As seen in Chapter 3, environmental legislation in South Africa reflected the main concerns of the environmental movement, while also addressing some problems

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128, figure 6.4; *Suid-Afrika 1980/1*, p. 138.

<sup>28</sup> *Report of the Planning Committee of the President's Council on priorities between conservation and development* (PC 5/1984), p. 15.

experienced during the industrialisation and urbanisation processes. Pollution control, probably the main concern of the environmental revolution, also received governmental attention prior to 1972 in the form of the Water Act (no 54 of 1956) and the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act (no 45 of 1965). The former controlled the use of water and the treatment and disposal of effluent, while the latter provided for the prevention of atmospheric pollution and for the establishment of a National Air Pollution Advisory Council.<sup>29</sup>

By 1972 South Africa already had an impressive list of acts (see sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) that directly or indirectly related to the environment. Shortcomings in legislation were addressed after 1972 through amendments, while others like the National Parks Act (no 57 of 1976) and the Prevention and Combating of Pollution of the Sea by Oil Act (no 6 of 1981) repealed earlier versions. New environmental legislation included the Weather Modification Control Act (no 78 of 1972), the Sea Birds and Seals Protection Act (no 46 of 1973) and the Dumping at Sea Control Act (no 73 of 1980).<sup>30</sup> The existing and new acts covered the whole environmental spectrum ranging from soil protection, nature and built-environment conservation, to the combating of atmospheric, marine, radiation, solid waste, noise, litter, and water pollution.<sup>31</sup>

According to André Rabie, a South African environmental law expert, South African environmental legislation was adequate by 1976.<sup>32</sup> Shortcomings did exist as highlighted by the numerous works written by Rabie<sup>33</sup> and by the important book, *Environmental concerns in South Africa*, edited by Rabie and Fuggle.<sup>34</sup> Despite

<sup>29</sup> M.A. Rabie, *South African environmental legislation*, pp. 5-7; W. van der Merwe and D.C. Grobler, "Development of water pollution control in South Africa" in *The Civil Engineer in South Africa* 31(10), October 1989, p. 357.

<sup>30</sup> *Butterworths statutes of South Africa: classified and annotated from 1910 as at 31 December 1994* 2, pp. 3-1 - 3-5.

<sup>31</sup> See PC 5/1984, pp. 16-18 for a list of environmental laws and the departments responsible for their enforcement.

<sup>32</sup> Rabie, *South African environmental legislation*, p. 193.

<sup>33</sup> See for example *ibid.*, pp. 13-189; M.A. Rabie, "Wildlife conservation and the law" in *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 6(2), July 1973, pp. 145-198; M.A. Rabie, "Legal remedies for environmental protection" in *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 5(3), November 1972, pp. 247-280; M.A. Rabie, *South African legislation with respect to the control of pollution of the sea* (South African National Scientific Programmes report 46).

<sup>34</sup> Johannesburg: Juta & Co. Ltd, 1983.

shortcomings, the main problem with environmental laws was the fact that the government failed in its attempt to enforce these laws. Soil conservation legislation, for example, was introduced for the first time in 1941; despite educational campaigns by the government and the NVT among the farming community, soil erosion in South Africa gradually increased.<sup>35</sup> In 1952 the average annual silt run-off in the country's rivers were estimated to be 400 million tons. By 1972 silt sampling in the Orange River, above the Hendrik Verwoerd Dam (now the Gariep Dam), indicated that the surrounding area alone was losing that amount of top soil annually. This in practice meant that the equivalent of 15 cm of the top layer of soil on 137 000 ha was lost annually.<sup>36</sup>

Enforcing environmental control measures was also difficult due to the government's direct involvement in the South African economy. Through Escom, Iscor and the South African Railways, the government was one of the major polluters in the country and its industries contributed to the rapid depletion of natural resources.<sup>37</sup> Within South African environmental legislation, the near "untouchable" status of the state, and thus also state-owned industries, in turn meant that the state was free to act as it wished where the environment was concerned. Air pollution control measures, for example, did not fully apply to the state. In terms of legislation the state was exempt from implementing measures to combat the control of smoke, and had little responsibility other than to inform the public if complaints were lodged against state-owned industries. In short, there was no mechanism in place that could ensure that the state prescribed to the standards laid down by law.<sup>38</sup>

According to Rabie and Erasmus one of the fundamental problems of South African environmental law is that "the underlying basis of the state's power to control pollution and conserve natural resources is that these powers be used in public interest. There is, however, no legal sanction in terms of which the state can be called

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<sup>35</sup> R.F. Fuggle, "An overview of lessons that can be learned from efforts to protect the South African environment" in *National Veld Trust jubilee conference, Pretoria, 2 to 4 November 1993*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>36</sup> Rabie, *South African environmental legislation*, p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> F.R. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie, "Air pollution" in Fuggle and Rabie (eds), pp. 296-298.

to account in this respect".<sup>39</sup> Public objections to administrative decisions by the government, for example if the state decided to build a highway in an ecologically sensitive area, were limited in terms of the administrative laws of South Africa. An applicant seeking a review of the administrative decision, was not allowed access to the court if the person did not establish *locus standi* (i.e. a direct personal interest in the outcome of the decision). Even if *locus standi* was established, the courts showed themselves unwilling to get involved in such questions, and almost never ruled against a project on the grounds that it was environmentally unsound.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.3.2 The Environment Planning Act (no 73 of 1975)

As mentioned earlier, the government initially opted not to formulate an all-embracing environmental conservation act that would become the sole responsibility of the environmental department to enforce. The main piece of legislation the Department of Planning, and from 1973 the Department of Planning and the Environment, had to enforce, was the Physical Planning and Utilisation of Resources Act (no 88 of 1967). This act was amended and renamed the Environment Planning Act (no 73) in 1975.<sup>41</sup>

The Physical Planning and Utilisation of Resources Act was an important piece of legislation at the time and fit neatly into the grand apartheid scheme of the government. It was aimed mainly, despite its name, at controlling the establishment of industries in the Republic through a policy of industrial decentralisation. Industrial decentralisation had two objectives: firstly, to stimulate industrial growth outside the main industrial centres in the country; and secondly, to provide work for black people close to their homelands in order to curb black migration to the white metropolitan areas.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> M.A. Rabie and M.G. Erasmus, "Environmental law" in Fuggle and Rabie (eds), pp. 48-49.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>41</sup> Rabie, *South African environmental legislation*, pp. 6, 8.

<sup>42</sup> SA Federated Chamber of Industries, *Guide to industrialists regarding metropolitan industrial expansion and the decentralisation of industries*, pp. 7-15; I. Botha, 'n *Teoretiese en historiese oorsig van streekbeplanning in Suid-Afrika, met riglyne vir 'n toekomstige beleid* (M.Sc. dissertation), pp. 50-52.

According to the Urban Foundation, industrial decentralisation in South Africa was used as a political instrument to facilitate apartheid by increasing the number of black people residing and working within their designated homelands. The rationale behind the policy was that, if implemented effectively, black urbanisation of white cities could be reversed and black people would move back to their respective homelands.<sup>43</sup> The Physical Planning and Utilisation of Resources Act also regulated the racial composition of the work force by determining colour ratios with which industries had to comply. Specific areas were identified in which coloured and Indian people were given preference over black people in terms of job opportunities.<sup>44</sup>

The amending and renaming of the act to the Environment Planning Act in 1975 gave the Department of Planning and the Environment the power to control land use in the Republic. Previously its power was limited to the restriction of land for industrial development; after 1975 land reservation for a whole range of other uses like water works, harbours, airports, power stations, nuclear installations, and recreational and tourist attractions was included.<sup>45</sup> Industrial decentralisation remained the core of the Environment Planning Act, with the Department of Planning and the Environment enforcing these measures.<sup>46</sup>

Prior to 1973, the Department of Planning can be viewed as an instrument in the implementation of grand apartheid. Its power to control industrial settlement and the racial composition of the work force had a direct bearing on the lives of black, coloured and Indian people in South Africa. This situation did not change after the department was renamed the Department of Planning and the Environment, and for the first five years of its existence, the "environment" department was closely involved in attempts to make the domestic policy of apartheid succeed. This connection between apartheid and the environment was not new, and all its components contributed towards the formation of a negative attitude towards the natural

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<sup>43</sup> Urban Foundation, *Policies for a new urban future: regional development reconsidered*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>44</sup> M. Horrell, *Laws affecting race relations in South Africa, 1948-1976*, pp. 170-174.

<sup>45</sup> Rabie, *South African environmental legislation*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>46</sup> See SA Federated Chamber of Industries, pp. 7-48.



environment and environmental conservation measures among black people in particular.<sup>47</sup>

#### **4.3.3 The Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982)**

The origin of the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982) dates back to 1977 when a Bill on the Disposal of Containers was referred to a select committee of the House of Assembly. The select committee was transformed into a Commission of Enquiry that had to report on the bill and had to recommend methods to combat the enormous litter problem in the country. The Commission tabled its report in 1978 and recommended that the proposed Bill on the Disposal of Containers be dropped. In its place the Commission submitted its own bill that dealt only with solid waste control. The government, though excepting some of the Commission's recommendations, decided not to accept the bill on solid waste control and opted rather to review environmental conservation in South Africa.<sup>48</sup>

The result of this review was the publication of the White Paper on a National Policy Regarding Environmental Conservation in 1980. The White Paper was a landmark event in that it was the first time the South African government attempted to define its broad environmental policy. The White Paper highlighted many issues including the need to find a golden mean between development and environmental conservation in the country. It included in its broad policy the need for environmental impact assessments of all new development projects and the promotion of environmental education as a key factor in conservation efforts. The White Paper also dealt with specific environmental issues like noise, air, marine, radiation, solid waste, litter and water pollution, as well as with soil, nature and built-environment conservation. It proposed the restructuring of the Council for the Environment (version 1) into a statutory body with a co-ordinating role and the centralisation of the administration of environmental affairs.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Interviews: F.R. Fuggle, Cape Town, 26.3.1998; F. Khan, Cape Town, 30.3.1998.

<sup>48</sup> Rabie and Erasmus, p. 36; J.I. Glazewski, "Current and future directions in South African environmental law" in *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 13(1), May 1991, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> W.P.O -'80, pp. 5-13. See also Malan, Rabie and Fuggle, pp. 115-116.

The White Paper was followed on 25 July 1980 by the publication for comment of an Environment Conservation Bill. The Bill surfaced again in 1981 as the Environment Conservation Bill (no 39 of 1981) and was referred, after its first reading, to a select committee appointed to inquire into and report on the bill. This committee was changed into the Commission of Inquiry into Environmental Legislation, which despite a broad ranging mandate, reported only on the 1981 bill. The Commission's report included its findings and views and its own Environment Conservation Bill which incorporated its recommendations. The Commission's own bill became the basis of the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982), promulgated by the House of Assembly on 7 July 1982.<sup>50</sup>

Despite its name the Environment Conservation Act was not all-embracing and it dealt only with limited aspects of the environment. The most important part of the act provided for the establishment of a statutory Council for the Environment which, like its predecessor, was to remain an advisory body. Other important provisions included the management of nature areas and the power to formulate and enforce regulations relating to solid waste and noise control. The act had two major weaknesses: firstly, the Environment Conservation Act was subordinate to all other acts of parliament and its provisions had no overriding powers with respect to any provisions contained in any other act. Secondly, the act provided for the overall co-ordination of environment-related activities through the Council for the Environment. The Council in turn had to advise the Minister of Water Affairs, Forestry and Environmental Conservation. The Minister, however, was not given the corresponding co-ordinating powers.<sup>51</sup>

The Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982) had many shortcomings and could in no way be seen as an all-embracing national policy on environmental conservation. However, the importance of the act is not to be found in its content, but rather in the fact that an act of this nature was promulgated in the South African parliament. The act was far from perfect, but it was a first step towards a central

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<sup>50</sup> Rabie and Erasmus, p. 37. See also *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into environmental legislation* (RP 10/1982).

<sup>51</sup> Rabie and Erasmus, pp. 37-38; *Debates of the House of Assembly*, 11.6.1982, col. 9310-9337.

national environmental policy - a step that the government had resisted from 1971 when the UP asked for such a policy.

#### **4.4 Factors that affected the government's environmental efforts**

The demand for governments to exercise environmental stewardship came strongly to the fore at and after UNCHE. However, UNCHE also highlighted the fact that sensitivity towards the environment was a luxury that only the developed states could afford. Mass poverty, lack of basic services and high unemployment rates were only some of the issues which governments in developing countries had to confront on a daily basis. Add to this political instability and the lack of financial resources, and it becomes obvious that governments in developing states could hardly be expected to make environmental issues their top priority.

Political and economic issues ensured that the environment never made it on to the South African government's list of top priorities between 1972 and 1982. It was a period, like so many others in South African history, that was dominated by political events both within and without the borders of the country. These political events in turn strongly influenced the economy and it became very important for the government to pursue a policy of economic development at all costs. The political events of the day placed serious constraints on the government's environmental efforts, both on initiatives already implemented and on the possibility of new ones.

##### **4.4.1 Domestic factors: the policy of apartheid, black resistance and changes in the political dispensation**

Domestically three processes dominated in the period under discussion, namely the policy of apartheid and the implementation thereof, renewed black resistance to apartheid and investigations into a new political dispensation for the Republic.

The South African government's commitment to its domestic policy of apartheid placed constraints on its environmental efforts and highlighted the ambiguities that existed in the government's environment-related activities. Central to the apartheid

policy was the separate development of the various racial groups in South Africa, and the country was divided into different areas for this purpose. The task of environmental conservation in the then native reserves and later the homelands was entrusted to the Department of Bantu Administration.<sup>52</sup> Prior to 1972 this Department achieved a notorious status with ENGOS in South Africa after it broke up the world's biggest national park, the Etosha National Park in South West Africa (SWA - today Namibia), to create two homelands for the Herero and the Nama tribes.<sup>53</sup> With apartheid also practised in the country's national parks and game reserves, the Department created Manyeleti, a game reserve near the Kruger National Park (KNP), in 1967 for the sole use of black people. The Department of Bantu Administration (later renamed Bantu Administration and Development) remained in charge of environmental affairs in the homelands until organisational structures for this purpose were created within the homeland governing bodies.<sup>54</sup>

In the course of the seventies it became important for the government to prove apartheid workable because of internal and external resistance to apartheid and the increasing isolation of the Republic in international political and economical arenas. It was thus essential for the government to grant independent status to some of the homelands and to help them get on their feet. In a style reminiscent of British colonial rule, homelands were first granted self-government before independence would be considered. Transkei obtained this status in 1963, with Ciskei, KwaZulu, Bophuthatswana and Lebowa following in 1972. The government partially realised their goal of independent homelands when the Republic of Transkei came into existence in October 1976. Bophuthatswana (1976), Venda (1979) and Ciskei (1981) were soon added to the list. Lebowa, Gazankulu, KwaZulu, Qwaqwa, KaNgwane and KwaNdebele remained self-governing until the homeland system was abolished, and the homelands reincorporated into South Africa in 1994.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> "The most vital job in the country" in *African Wildlife* 28(4), 1974, pp. 31-33.

<sup>53</sup> R.C. Bigalke, "The Etosha problem" in *Society for the Protection of the Environment Newsletter* 1(2), 1971, pp. 10-14; J. Clarke, *Our fragile land: South Africa's environmental crisis*, p. 103.

<sup>54</sup> "The most vital job in the country", pp. 31-33.

<sup>55</sup> T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history* (4<sup>th</sup> edition), pp. 362, 374-378, 413-414; H. Kotzé and A. Greyling, *Politieke organisasies in Suid-Afrika A-Z*, pp. 201-205.

The domestic policy of apartheid had a profound effect on all people of colour in South Africa. This not only included their political, economic and social marginalisation, but it also spilled over to the natural environment. Apartheid's environmental toll was tremendous on both homelands and on the black townships bordering the edges of white communities.

The homeland system in particular hastened the environmental degradation in the Republic through the overpopulation of these areas. By 1980 an estimated 10,5 million black people lived in the homelands that comprised less than 13% of South Africa's total land surface. This in turn meant that the average population density in the homelands was 66 people per km<sup>2</sup>. The overcrowding of the homelands had a marked influence on the natural environment and directly led to soil erosion. By 1980 soil erosion was widespread in all the homelands. In the Ciskei alone 46% of the land was moderately or severely eroded. With an average of two hectares of land per family, and a general lack of capital for essential farming inputs and conservation measures, land in the homelands deteriorated to the point where it could no longer sustain the people who lived on it.<sup>56</sup>

Overpopulation coupled with a general lack of electricity led to the overexploitation of wood fuel resources within the homelands. By 1980 four of the ten homelands were consuming more wood than their land produced each year, and it was projected that the remaining six would reach that level of consumption by the early 1980s. Though overcrowded, the homelands experienced a shortage in labour. The system of migrant workers that existed in the South African economy meant that black men and women in their prime economically productive years, spent the majority of their time outside their homelands working in "white" South Africa. Labour shortages in practice meant that the development of the homelands was neglected while black men and women of working age helped the South African economy to develop. With an estimated 80% of

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<sup>56</sup> A.B. Durning, *Apartheid's environmental toll* (Worldwatch Paper 95), pp. 5-14; L. Timberlake, *Africa in crisis: the causes, the cures of environmental bankruptcy* (new edition), pp. 152-161. See also B. Huntley, R. Siegfried and C. Sunter, *South African environments into the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, pp. 52-63.

the population living below the breadline, widespread poverty also made conservation of the natural environment difficult.<sup>57</sup>

The policy of separate development also found expression in an urban policy that reserved certain areas for certain population groups. The status of black people as "visitors" to "white" South Africa meant that little planning and development went into the black townships bordering white communities. Lack of drinking water, waste removal and sanitation services, proper housing and electricity combined to make townships a hazard for both human health and the natural environment. Questions have also been raised in the past as to the quality of the soil on which townships were developed, e.g. Riverlea, a coloured township near Johannesburg, was developed on a yellow gold mine dump.<sup>58</sup>

A general lack of electricity in the township areas played havoc with the natural environment through abnormally high levels of visible air pollution. Open fires and coal stoves fuelled by either coal or wood provided not only energy to prepare food, but also heated the small dwellings in the townships. Coal especially proved to be an environmental hazard for residents and medical reports showed that children residing in Soweto suffered more asthma and chest colds than children elsewhere in the country. The main problem with the use of coal is the fact that it is the most polluting of fossil fuels. However, coal is the cheapest and the major source of energy in South Africa,<sup>59</sup> and was therefore used by the majority of the people in the country simply because they could afford no other energy source, even when electricity was available in their areas. The government did try to address this problem and sponsored research that led to the development of a smokeless stove at the beginning of the 1970s. However, this stove did not come cheap and the lower income groups, which were the target group, were simply not able to afford it.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Durning, pp. 5-14; Timberlake, pp. 152-161.

<sup>58</sup> Huntley, Siegfried and Sunter, pp. 68-71; B. Smuts, "Green lessons of apartheid" in *African Wildlife* 49(2), 1995, pp. 6-12; Durning, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> 82% of South African energy is generated by coal.

<sup>60</sup> Durning, pp. 23-27; Clarke, pp. 37-39.

Black resistance to apartheid resurfaced in the beginning of the 1970s in the form of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) initiated and propagated by Steve Biko. At the core of the black consciousness philosophy was the renouncing of all things, values and ideals associated with white people. In line with Pan-Africanistic rhetoric,<sup>61</sup> Biko stressed the intellectual emancipation and the rediscovery of the history and achievements of black people. Black consciousness was spread by a host of new organisations including the South African Students Organisation, the Black People's Convention and the Black Community Programmes set up in 1972 to promote initiatives in the provision of health and welfare services in black communities.<sup>62</sup>

The BCM paved the way for the watershed event in black resistance to apartheid, namely the Soweto riots of 1976. On 16 June 1976 large-scale riots broke out in Soweto because of black resistance to Afrikaans as the medium of instruction of certain school subjects, the government's negligence to recognise the development of an explosive situation, and black reaction to its political, economic and social marginalisation in South Africa. The riots sparked off large-scale unlawfulness in Soweto and it took nearly eighteen months before conditions returned to "normal" by the end of 1977. The Soweto riots resulted in great loss of life. According to official sources 172 black people were shot dead and a further 1 439 wounded between June and September 1976. Numerous properties were damaged in the process, including 24 schools, three clinics and three libraries.<sup>63</sup>

The political unrest spread from its origin in Soweto to other parts of the country. Riots broke out on the East Rand, in Pretoria, at the University of Zululand, in Port Elizabeth and in the vicinity of Cape Town. These riots also claimed several lives and the damage to property incurred included the burning down of the library and

<sup>61</sup> See for example the works of Leopold Senghor and Marcus Garvey.

<sup>62</sup> T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, pp. 322-325.

<sup>63</sup> B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, pp. 461-463.

administration block of the University of Zululand. It is estimated that the total number of deaths between June 1976 and the end of 1977 exceeded 600.<sup>64</sup>

In the latter half of the 1970s investigations into a new political dispensation resulted in the restructuring of the government's apartheid policy to incorporate both coloured and Indian people into the white-controlled political system. The first step in the direction of constitutional changes was taken in 1973 with the appointment of the Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to the Coloured Population Group, headed by Prof. Erika Theron. The Commission tabled its report in June 1976 and concluded, *inter alia*, that coloured people should be given direct representation in the House of Assembly and should have a direct say at all the levels of government.<sup>65</sup>

The government was not willing to grant coloured people direct representation but was willing to give them greater political autonomy. The necessary political mechanism to investigate and later to formulate just how coloured and Indian people would achieve greater political autonomy was put into place by August 1976. Between 1976 and 1982 "division of power" became the catch phrase for the new political dispensation. This envisaged division of power between white, coloured and Indian peoples was not acceptable to all within the ruling NP, and it ultimately led to a split within party ranks. The splinter group, under the leadership of Dr Andries Treurnicht, founded the Conservative Party (CP) on 20 March 1982. The CP rejected the Prime Minister's restructuring of apartheid and favoured the strengthening of Verwoerdian style apartheid through the establishment of homelands for coloured and Indian people. In September 1983 the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act was formally adopted in the House of Assembly. A whites only referendum on 2 November 1983 gave 65,9% voters' support to the newly adopted constitution, which was duly implemented in the course of 1984.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 463-464; Lodge, pp. 328-330. See also A. Brooks and J. Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the storm: the origins and development of the uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976* for a detailed account.

<sup>65</sup> Davenport, pp. 381-383.

<sup>66</sup> Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 472-480.



Both the resurfacing of black resistance to apartheid and the process of constitutional changes had a profound effect on the government's environmental efforts in that it made sure that the environment never made it on to the list of top priorities. The government was too busy quenching fires that arose in the form of black resistance to apartheid and white resistance to the tricameral parliamentary system, to heed the growing environmental crisis in the country. Discussions on the environment were extremely limited and in most cases occurred only when environmental legislation was debated in the House of Assembly. Even then the discussions remained focused on only minor aspects of the natural environment, thereby failing to establish the holistic nature of environmental issues. The absence of highly active ENGOs also contributed to this state of affairs in that the necessary "checks-and-balances" that exist in developed countries in the form of radical, politicised ENGOs to keep the government on its toes, were very absent in South Africa between 1972 and 1982.

#### 4.4.2 Regional factors

Political events in the Southern Africa region also influenced the way in which the South African government viewed the natural environment. Before 1974, despite an official *détante* policy pursued by the Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster, South Africa's regional policy was very simple, namely to uphold white colonial rule in its neighbouring countries. The military coup d'état in Portugal on 25 April 1974 changed both the colour of the rulers on the subcontinent and South Africa's foreign policy towards the region. The coup completely shattered the white corridor behind which South Africa preferred to hide from black Africa and opened the country to direct hostilities on its borders. The net result was that South Africa had to formulate a new regional policy that would protect its political, security and economic interests.<sup>67</sup>

South Africa's initial reaction to Mozambique's independence in June 1975 was cautious and Vorster made it known that South Africa would co-operate with the new government economically and maintain the existing beneficial links. Soon afterwards Vorster gradually started to withdraw his support for Ian Smith's minority white

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<sup>67</sup> J. Barber and J. Barratt, *South Africa's foreign policy: the search for status and security, 1945-1988*, pp. 175-177.

government in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), which in the end contributed to Smith's downfall and the establishment of majority rule under Robert Mugabe in 1980. South Africa's involvement in Angola was not as simple as in the preceding cases. Conflict in Angola directly threatened South African interests in SWA and, after an initial period of hesitation, Vorster approved the direct involvement of the South African Defence Force (SADF, now the South African National Defence Force) in October 1975. The country's assistance to the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) and the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) in their struggle against the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), was in part a reaction to the possibility of a pro-communist MPLA governing Angola. Russian and Cuban support of the MPLA in the form of soldiers and weaponry only heightened the fear of a communist take-over in the country.<sup>68</sup>

South Africa's involvement in the region became a major issue after Vorster's resignation in 1978 because of poor health and the Information Scandal. P.W. Botha, the Minister of Defence, succeeded Vorster as prime minister. Botha's rise to power introduced the concept of "total onslaught" into the vocabulary of South Africans, who held the view that white South Africa was threatened by a communist onslaught (planned by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics - USSR) that would bring an end to white minority rule in the country. In order to combat the total onslaught, South Africa had to devise a "total strategy" to protect the country from its enemies. A key component of the total strategy was the policy of destabilisation of the country's neighbours through cross-border raids and support of anti-governmental forces in the individual countries. South Africa also re-entered the Angolan conflict in May 1978 with the launching of Operation Reindeer after a temporary withdrawal of SADF troops in 1976.<sup>69</sup>

The increased militarisation of the South African society after Botha came to power created an environment in which any action of the government could be justified in terms of the total onslaught. All resistance to the apartheid state and the country's

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180-196; Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 450-451.

<sup>69</sup> Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 468-469; M. Coleman (ed.), *A crime against humanity: analysing repression in the apartheid state*, p. 7.

administration of SWA were seen as mere parts of this onslaught and people critical of the government quickly earned the title of "communist". The total strategy effectively placed South Africa under the rule of the so-called securocrats, and soldiers, policemen and security officers played a prominent role in the defence of white interests in South Africa.<sup>70</sup>

South Africa's involvement in the Angolan civil war, the struggle for independence in SWA and attempts to destabilise its neighbours, increased the role played by the SADF in the region. The activities of the SADF in turn had a profound effect on the natural and human environment. The environmental track record of the SADF is often conflicting and can broadly be divided into positive and negative influences.

The SADF, as the fourth largest land-controlling authority<sup>71</sup> in the Republic, initially showed greater sensitivity towards the natural environment than the government did between 1972 and 1982. Official environmental conservation efforts started in 1978 when the first environmental Defence Force Order that related to the ecological management of military controlled land was issued. This order focused on the conservation and protection of fauna and flora on military bases, and was followed in 1979 by an order that promoted the planting of indigenous trees.<sup>72</sup> In 1981 the SADF published a detailed environmental policy that *inter alia* required an EIA of all new developments on military controlled land and the active combating of soil erosion.<sup>73</sup> In the same year the Air Force Base Hoedspruit was declared a nature reserve, thus becoming the third military base after Vhembe (1967) and Corbadraai (1979) to obtain this status. Honorary membership of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) was also granted to the SADF in 1981 in recognition of the work it had done in environmental conservation.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 468-469; Coleman, p. 7.

<sup>71</sup> The SADF does not own land but is allocated land by the Department of Public Works.

<sup>72</sup> S. Godschalk, "In defence of the environment" in *Conserva* 6(4), July/August 1991, pp. 10-11; "Behind the guns: protection for our wildlife" in *African Wildlife* 32(4), 1978, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Phia Steyn Private Document Collection (PSPDC): Nature and environmental conservation in the SA Defence Force, pp. 3-15.

<sup>74</sup> W. Kleyn, "Die rol van die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag in natuur- en omgewingsbewaring" in *Militaria* 18(1), 1988, pp. 29, 33, 36. See also Documentation Centre of the South African National Defence Force (D.Doc.S.), HSL, Group 7, Holder 56, 401/1/3/9-B (Natuurbewaring in die SAW).

However, environmental conservation was a secondary objective of the SADF. The primary aim of the SADF was (and still is) the defence of South Africa<sup>75</sup> and this aim resulted in activities that caused widespread environmental deterioration both within and without the borders of the country. Internally armaments testing in ecologically sensitive areas (e.g. St Lucia, De Hoop and Rooi Els),<sup>76</sup> the relocation of communities and the occupation of tracts of land by the SADF (e.g. Riemvasmaak, Schmidtsdrift and Lohatla),<sup>77</sup> the two military units inside the KNP<sup>78</sup> and the sisal hedge on the border with Zimbabwe,<sup>79</sup> were only some of the environmental abuses of the SADF.

The sisal hedge along the banks of the Limpopo River is a good example of just how the defence task of the SADF played havoc with the natural environment. Called the Madimbo Corridor, the hedge stretched for nearly 130 km from the Madimbo Military Base along the Limpopo River westward past Beit Bridge to Skietwater. The sole purpose of this barrier was to curb illegal border crossings between South Africa and Zimbabwe. The planting of the sisal hedge, that started in 1976, meant that all the natural vegetation in the area, which is considered a sensitive ecosystem, had to be removed. This sisal not only disturbed the ecological balance in the area but also, once it had grown, cut off wildlife on the southern side from the only water resource in the area, namely the Limpopo. The latter received some attention from the SADF and the drilling of waterholes for the use of wildlife was recommended.<sup>80</sup>

The sisal fence was short-lived and in the beginning of the 1980s the SADF opted to erect an electrified fence. With the permission of the Department of Agriculture a firm was contracted to destroy the sisal hedge. Investigations into the way in which this hedge was disposed of, concluded in 1996 that the SADF had, between 1982 and 1994, sanctioned the use of herbicides to kill the sisal plants. The herbicides caused

<sup>75</sup> PSPDC: Nature and environmental conservation in the SA Defence Force, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> See P. Mckenzie, "Weapons testing: its impact on people and the environment" in J. Cock and P. Mckenzie (eds), *From defence to development: redirecting military resources in South Africa*, pp. 85-96.

<sup>77</sup> See P. Mckenzie, "Reclaiming the land: a case study of Riemvasmaak" in Cock and Mckenzie (eds), pp. 60-81.

<sup>78</sup> P. Mckenzie, "The SANDF: conservation or contamination" in Cock and Mckenzie (eds), p. 84.

<sup>79</sup> *Beeld*, 23.2.96, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> Jan Giliomee Private Document Collection (JGPDC), Habitat Council: L.P. Fatti, Defence Force sisal barrier along the Limpopo River (memorandum), pp. 1-3; D.Doc.S., HSL, Group 7, Holder 56, 401/1/3/9-M55: Letter from Comdt P.S. Grobbelaar, 21.10.1981.

widespread soil and water pollution by poisoning the soil of the Limpopo Valley and water resources stretching from Messina to the KNP. This pollution left large tracts of privately owned land poisoned with farmers unable to continue with commercial agriculture in the affected areas.<sup>81</sup>

Externally the SADF contributed to environmental destruction in the Southern Africa region through the key role it played in the execution of the destabilisation policy and its involvement in the conflict in Angola. The environmental toll of the SADF's activities in the region has not yet been properly assessed. However, some observations are both feasible and realistic. The SADF, either through direct involvement or indirectly through material support to resistance groups like UNITA and Resistência Nacional de Moçambique (Renamo), contributed to the destruction of fauna and flora, especially in Angola and Mozambique. In Angola, the civil war had a profound influence on wildlife conservation. Prior to the Portuguese departure in 1974 the country had six national parks and two "natural integral" parks. By 1976 all these parks had been evacuated by the conservation staff and had become strongholds of the opposing groups.<sup>82</sup> Poaching was a daily occurrence, and after the SADF re-entered the Angolan conflict in 1976, South African soldiers actively participated in this. By the early 1980s, wildlife numbers had fallen considerably with the elephant population in Cuando Cubango (south-east Angola), for example, dropping from an estimated 10 000 in 1970-1975, to just over 1 000. By 1987 the elephant population in this region was down to 187.<sup>83</sup>

Probably the most problematic and dangerous leftover of conflict in the region is the estimated 20 million anti-personnel land-mines that continue the destruction long after hostilities have ended. The mining of strategic installations, roads and camps was an integral part of the conflict in the region, and the SADF participated in this both

<sup>81</sup> *Beeld*, 23.2.96, p. 11; 15.3.96, p. 7; 22.3.1996, p. 12; 27.3.96, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> M. Hough, "Security, war and the environment" in *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 12(2), November 1990, pp. 4-5, 10-11; S.C.J. Joubert, "The magnificent national parks in Angola" in *African Wildlife* 25, 1971, pp. 61-65; B. Huntley, "Angola: a situation report" in *African Wildlife* 30(1), 1976, pp. 10-14.

<sup>83</sup> J. Cock, "Introduction" in Cock and McKenzie (eds), p. 6. See J. Breytenbach, *Eden's exiles: one soldier's fight for paradise*, pp. 7-44, 105-107, 151-155, 204-208 for an emotional account of the impact of the Angolan conflict on the country's wildlife resources.

directly and indirectly. Direct participation included the mining of areas around military encampments and installations, and along power lines in northern SWA. Despite mine disposal operations shortly before the SADF finally withdrew in 1989, leftover mines have continued to injure people and livestock in the area. Indirect involvement included the supplying of anti-personnel land-mines along with other weapons, ammunition and food to Renamo in the covert Operation Mila on a constant basis. The consequences of mining large tracts of land are devastating. Mines not only inflict injury and at times death to humans and livestock, but it also means that commercial agriculture in the immediate vicinity is impossible due to fear of land-mines. It disrupts the economic life of rural communities, while clearing the minefields has proven to be an expensive, dangerous and slow process.<sup>84</sup>

Destabilisation also resulted *inter alia* in huge loss of life, the disruption of economic activities, famine (South Africa has been accused of using a policy of starving people in an attempt to turn them against the pro-communist Frente de Libertação de Mozambique, i.e. Frelimo, in Mozambique), a growing refugee problem, the loss of existing production and loss of economic growth.<sup>85</sup> In its attempts to defend the country, the SADF, as an instrument of the South African government, caused far-reaching environmental destruction. The few and individual cases in which wildlife was "adopted" by military bases and personnel (e.g. the lion and lioness Terry and Liza at Fort Doppies)<sup>86</sup> and the nature reserves at military basis, should never solely be used in judging the SADF's environmental track record.

#### 4.4.3 International factors

On the international political level, the Cold War and the isolation of South Africa influenced the interaction of the South African government with its natural environment. The Cold War, which divided the world into a pro-capitalist West (led by the USA) and a pro-communist East (led by the USSR), directly led to the build-up

<sup>84</sup> See A. Vines, "Still killing: land-mines in Southern Africa" in Cock and Mckenzie (eds), pp. 148-162 for more details.

<sup>85</sup> J. Hanlon, "Relations with Southern Africa" in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds), *South African Review* 4 (2<sup>nd</sup> impression), pp. 332-340.

<sup>86</sup> See Breytenbach, pp. 108-133.

of large nuclear arsenals on both sides of the ideological fence. Within this context South Africa, which regarded itself as a Western ally, embarked upon its own nuclear programme from 1948 onwards. In that year the Union parliament passed the Atomic Energy Act in terms of which the Atomic Energy Board (AEB) was established in 1949. The AEB was given control over the entire nuclear programme in the country. The activities of the AEB in the first few decades were limited to the supplying of uranium to especially the USA and Britain, and to the development of nuclear technology with the help of the USA, Britain, France, Argentina, Brazil, Iran, Israel and the Republic of China (Taiwan). South Africa acquired its first nuclear reactor, SAFARI-1, from the USA in terms of Dwight Eisenhower's "Atoms for peace" programme. This reactor, which began operation at Pelindaba in 1965, was primarily a research facility and was run on enriched uranium supplied by the USA. In 1967 a second reactor, Pelindaba-Zero or SAFARI-2, was commissioned by the AEB.<sup>87</sup>

By 1970 the government and the AEB made it known that South Africa possessed the necessary technology to enrich uranium and a special agency, the Uranium Enrichment Corporation (UCOR), was set up to explore the possibilities in this particular area. With the help of the Federal Republic of Germany, UCOR opened a pilot enrichment plant at Valindaba in 1976. The acquisition of enrichment technology was very important for future nuclear developments in the country and it was - from the government's point of view - acquired at just the right time. Changes in the Southern Africa region that resulted from the Portuguese decision to withdraw from Angola and Mozambique and the political instability that followed, led to the South African government's decision to develop its own nuclear weapons. The rationale behind the decision was that nuclear weapons would act as an effective deterrent to counter the external threat.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> T. auf der Heyde *et al.*, "The power of the state and the state of power: recent developments in South Africa's nuclear industry" in Moss and Obery (eds), pp. 469-480; D. Fig, "Apartheid's nuclear arsenal: deviation from development" in Cock and Mckenzie (eds), pp. 163-165; W. Stumpf, "The birth and death of the South African nuclear weapons programme" (paper read at the Unione Scienziati per il Disarmo conference, "50 years after Hiroshima", Castiglione, 28.9.1995-2.10.1995), <<http://www.aec.co.za/strategy.htm>>, 1995.

<sup>88</sup> Fig, "Apartheid's...", pp. 164-165; Stumpf.

By the time of the Portuguese withdrawal, South Africa's position in the international political arena had deteriorated considerably, and the international community strengthened its isolationist stance towards the Republic. Some states which possessed nuclear technology, in particular the USA, also started to apply restrictions on nuclear trade and the exchange of nuclear technology with South Africa. From 1976 on the USA refused to export the fuel elements for the SAFARI-1 reactor. The transfer of nuclear technology to countries not party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was further prohibited in terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act passed by the US congress in 1978. The isolation of South Africa from the international nuclear industry was not confined to individual countries, because the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) actively participated in this regard. South Africa was denied its designated seat on the IAEA Board of Governors in 1977 and was replaced by Egypt on the Board as the "most advanced nuclear country in Africa". Participation in the general conference of the IAEA held in India in 1979 was also denied. A resolution was passed at the event urging South Africa to join the NPT and to subject its nuclear activities to international safeguards.<sup>89</sup>

The security situation in the Southern Africa region coupled with the isolation of the country internationally made the government more determined than before to develop nuclear weapons. This determination was evidenced by the discovery of a nuclear test site, built between 1974 and 1977 at Vastrap in the Kalahari, by a USSR surveillance satellite (Cosmos 922) in 1977 and the pressure from the USSR, the USA and France to dismantle it.<sup>90</sup> At the opening of the Natal NP congress on 30 August 1977, Senator O.P.F. Horwood, the Minister of Finance at the time, in response to foreign pressure to dismantle the Vastrap nuclear test site, emphasised that South Africa would reserve the right to use its nuclear potential for other than peaceful purposes when he remarked that "if we wish to do things with our nuclear potential, we jolly will do it according to our own decisions and our own judgement".<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> It is important to note that South Africa, prior to 1979, did subject some of its nuclear activities like SAFARI-1 and -2 to the safeguards of the IAEA. India, the host country of the 1979 IAEA general conference, was also a non-signatory of the NPT. No resolutions were adopted against India's nuclear activities. Stumpf.

<sup>90</sup> Fig, "Apartheid's...", p. 173.

<sup>91</sup> *The Star*, 30.8.1977, p. 1; 1.9.1977, p. 3.



It was only on 24 March 1993, in a joint session of parliament, that State President F.W. de Klerk made a full public disclosure of South Africa's nuclear arsenal. According to De Klerk, the decision was taken to develop seven nuclear fission devices, from 1978 onwards. By 1989, when the programme was abandoned, only six devices had been completed.<sup>92</sup> De Klerk did not shed any light on longstanding speculation that South Africa had tested a nuclear device in 1979. On 22 December 1979 a double flash characteristic of a nuclear explosion was picked up by a US Vela satellite off the Prince Edward Islands and thus within South African territorial waters.<sup>93</sup> South Africa's position from the outset had been that it did not detonate a nuclear device in the area.<sup>94</sup> However, controversy persisted with David Fig even speculating that South Africa had helped Israel test one of the latter's tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>95</sup>

Apart from the nuclear weapons programme, the AEB continued with research into nuclear power. Despite reservations from Escom, into whose internal electricity grid the nuclear power had to be fed, it went along with the plans of the AEB and commissioned the construction of two 922-megawatt power reactors.<sup>96</sup> The farm Duynefontein (renamed Koeberg), 28km north of Cape Town, was bought by Escom after it had been determined that it would be the best location for the development of a nuclear power station in the country. The oil crisis of 1973 and the oil boycotts instituted by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) against the export of oil to South Africa, had a great influence on Escom's views on nuclear energy. The event helped bring about a shift from a negative to a positive attitude and Escom started to argue in favour of the development of nuclear energy.<sup>97</sup>

The tender for the construction of the two 922-megawatt power reactors was awarded to a French consortium in 1976. The Koeberg contract was signed in August 1976, to

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<sup>92</sup> *Debates of Parliament*, 24.3.1993, col. 3465-3472.

<sup>93</sup> Fig, "Apartheid's...", p. 173.

<sup>94</sup> See Stumpf for the position of the AEB.

<sup>95</sup> Fig, "Apartheid's...", p. 174.

<sup>96</sup> 1 megawatt = 1 000 kilowatt.

<sup>97</sup> Fig, "Apartheid's...", p. 169; Auf der Heyde, pp. 480-481.

be followed by a bilateral agreement between France and South Africa in October 1976, and a trilateral agreement with the IAEA. The trilateral agreement came into force on 5 January 1977 and dealt with the safeguards of the reactors. Koeberg only became operational in April 1984.<sup>98</sup> The problems surrounding the existence of Koeberg are threefold: firstly, South Africa has one of the largest known coal resources in the world, enough to export large quantities of low-sulphur coal while using high-sulphur coal to generate power locally. Secondly, Escom was already producing more energy from coal than the country needed when Koeberg became operational, and were able to produce double the amount of power if necessary without using nuclear power. Thirdly, nuclear power stations are not seen as safe industries despite claims from the industry that they are the safest and cleanest energy source known to man. In terms of the energy needs of the country and the economic recession in the 1980s there seems to be no real justification for the development of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station that cost an estimated R3 billion.<sup>99</sup>

As mentioned earlier, South Africa was subjected to increasing political isolation in the international political arena due to its domestic policy of apartheid and its control over SWA. Starting with the Commonwealth in 1961, the country was forced out of many international organisations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC, 1964) and the General Assembly of the UN (1974). Despite being expelled from the General Assembly, South Africa opted to continue its membership of the UN, since voluntary withdrawal would have left the country open to challenges to its sovereign status.<sup>100</sup>

Sanctions were also imposed, dating back to the 1962 UN General Assembly call for economic and diplomatic sanctions against South Africa. It was followed in 1963 by a call from the UN Security Council for an arms embargo and the 1965 General Assembly recommending mandatory sanctions. A Special Committee on Apartheid

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<sup>98</sup> Fig, "Apartheid's...", p. 169.

<sup>99</sup> Auf der Heyde, pp. 480-481; D. Fig, "Nuclear energy in South Africa" in *South African Outlook* 121(2), February/March 1991, pp. 34-37. See also "Energy for the future" in *RSA Policy Review* 3(4), April 1990, pp. 20-29; A. van Heerden, "Could a 'Chernobyl' nuclear disaster happen here?" in *African Wildlife* 40(3), 1986, pp. 92-97.

<sup>100</sup> J. Lewis, "The impact of the cultural and sports boycotts" in J. Hanlon (ed.), *South Africa - The sanctions report: documents and statistics*, p. 210; Barber and Barratt, p. 169.

was also set up within the UN structures in 1962. Despite calls from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963) to impose more restrictions, sanctions between 1972 and 1982 were aimed mainly at restricting the supply of arms and oil, and at cultural and sports boycotts. Restrictions on arms sales to South Africa remained relatively ineffective until 1977 when the UN imposed the mandatory arms embargo prohibiting all member states from selling arms to the country.<sup>101</sup>

The oil crisis of 1973 and the resulting embargo on the supply of oil to South Africa by OPEC exposed the weak link in the country's economy. Prior to the crisis, 93% of crude oil used in the country was bought, *inter alia*, from Iran (33%), Saudi Arabia (24%), the Gulf States (20%) and Iraq (18%), while SASOL's oil-from-coal project provided the remaining 7%. With no natural oil of its own, the oil crisis threatened the transportation system in South Africa, a country that relied on oil to meet more than 80% of its energy needs. Help came in the form of Iran and it is estimated that between 1974 and 1979 Iran supplied almost 90% of all South Africa's oil imports.<sup>102</sup> The fall of the Shah of Iran during the Iranian Revolution in 1979 cut off the existing links and between 1979 and 1982 South Africa bought oil at any price from any country that was willing to supply it. The Arab oil embargo and the voluntary sanctions advocated by the UN had an enormous impact on the South African economy. In 1986 P.W. Botha acknowledged that between 1973 and 1984 the country paid R22 billion more for crude oil than what it would have spent if no embargo existed. Much of the R22 billion was spent on premiums, which the country had to pay the traders.<sup>103</sup>

The increasing economic, military and political isolation, coupled with the Cold War tensions and regional changes in Southern Africa, influenced the relationship of the country with its natural environment in a number of ways. Firstly, the economic sanctions imposed upon the government in turn meant that the government had to pursue a development policy that excluded any consideration of the environment and

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<sup>101</sup> Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 409-410. See also G. Crown, "Success of the arms embargo" in Hanlon (ed.), pp. 168-174.

<sup>102</sup> Barber and Barratt, pp. 156, 177-178.

<sup>103</sup> J. Woldendorp, "Some successes of the oil embargo" in Hanlon (ed.), pp. 175-179.

the limitations thereof. SASOL's oil-from-coal project serves as a good example. Based upon the Fischer-Tropsch indirect liquefaction process, the coal is heated until it turns into a gas, which is then treated with chemicals to produce a liquid resembling oil. The basic technology for the process was developed in the 1930s in Germany as a means to produce mass amounts of fuel.<sup>104</sup>

South Africa started to experiment with this technology in 1950 when the South African Coal, Oil and Gas Corporation Limited (SASOL) was established. SASOL obtained the mandate to develop synthetic fuel and was producing 7% of the fuel needs of the country by 1973. The oil crisis increased the demand for synthetic fuel and led to the expansion of SASOL's activities to Secunda where SASOL 2 was developed from 1974 onwards. The latter was expanded in 1979 and by May 1981 SASOL 3 was operational.<sup>105</sup>

The Fischer-Tropsch indirect liquefaction process which SASOL uses poses a number of environmental problems: it uses five barrels of water (795 litres) to make one barrel of fuel and costs about US \$75 per barrel of crude oil equivalent.<sup>106</sup> South Africa has a critical shortage of water and the inability to provide enough water for both private and industrial consumption in the future has necessitated the development of the Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme in co-operation with the Lesotho government.<sup>107</sup> At US \$75 per barrel, synthetic oil was much more expensive than the US \$14,69 average of a barrel of oil in 1974.<sup>108</sup> During production 60% of the initial energy is lost in the process with only 40% of the energy ending up in liquid form. The use of coal as energy to heat the coal produces carbon dioxide emissions, sulphur and nitrogen oxides (the cause of acid rain), hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and fly ash normally associated with coal-fired powerplants. Together with this, synthetic fuel processing also creates hazardous wastes that are, at times, dumped directly into the river networks close to the industries.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Durning, pp. 25-26.

<sup>105</sup> "40 years of SASOL, 1950-1990" in *Sasol News* 3(1), [1990], pp. 1-5, 26-41.

<sup>106</sup> Durning, p. 26.

<sup>107</sup> Huntley, Siegfried and Sunter, pp. 61-63.

<sup>108</sup> A. Sampson, *The seven sisters: the great oil companies and the world they made*, p. 270.

<sup>109</sup> Durning, pp. 26-27; E. Koch, D. Cooper and H. Coetzee, *Water, waste and wildlife: the politics of ecology in South Africa*, p. 34.

The backbone of the South African economy has traditionally been its mining activities that have enabled the country to be the largest gold and platinum producer, and the largest or second largest chromium, manganese and vanadium producer in the world. The country also has a sizeable portion of the world production of diamonds, asbestos, coal, andalusite and antimony, to name but a few.<sup>110</sup> Outside pressure on the government in the form of economic sanctions made the country even more dependent on the mining industry. To keep its mining activities and exports high, the government has allowed the industry to function with very little interference. This freedom has led to numerous environmental abuses including the discharging of hazardous effluents into the country's river networks, dust pollution, and even to water scarcity, wetland degradation, water salination and radio-active pollution.<sup>111</sup> Pressure to conform to environmental standards have not really come from the government; it was the industry itself that started to impose self-regulating measures, albeit ones that would not hamper their production levels.<sup>112</sup>

The arms embargo threatened to hamper South Africa's military involvement in the Southern Africa region. Demands for new equipment had to be met and this resulted in higher defence budgets in order to finance arms production in the country. A higher defence budget in turn meant that other state departments had to make do with smaller budgets, which hampered their effectiveness. Military equipment also had to be tested and this led to widespread criticism from ENGOs because some of the tests were conducted in ecologically sensitive areas and nature reserves such as St Lucia and De Hoop.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> P. Robbins, "South Africa's non-strategic minerals" in Hanlon (ed.), pp. 267-274.

<sup>111</sup> Durning, pp. 15-18; Association for Progressive Communications, "Industry's impact on the environment", <<http://www.apc.org/environment/indust.html>>, s.a.; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, pp. 30-43.

<sup>112</sup> See for example C. Lindhout, "Gold mining and the environment: friends or foes?" in *Mining Survey* 2, 1990, pp. 21-27; C. Russel, "Coal mining: custodian or culprit?" in *Mining Survey* 1, 1991, pp. 7-14.

<sup>113</sup> P. Batchelor, "South Africa's arms industry: prospects for conversion" in Cock and Mckenzie (eds), pp. 97-121; Mckenzie, "Weapons testing...", pp. 85-96.

The political isolation and the exclusion of South Africa from a number of organisations like the IAEA and the UN General Assembly, impacted negatively on South Africa's involvement in the global environmental movement. Because of the isolation, South Africa was unable to participate in the activities of UNEP and was refused attendance of the appraisal conference held in Nairobi in 1982, ten years after UNCHE. Though politically isolated, the country participated in numerous international environmental conventions like the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Washington, 1973) and the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (Canberra, 1980).<sup>114</sup> However, many of the conventions resulted in mere extensions being made to the country's conservation efforts already in place and as such did not place serious limitations on South Africa's economic interests. When conventions did hold the promise to limit state activities in certain areas, like the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968), the government withheld its signature.<sup>115</sup>

South Africa's limited involvement in the global environmental movement meant that there were few influences from outside its borders that could check on the government's environmental performance. The world at large focused on apartheid and SWA/Namibia and neglected to also perform the role of environmental watchdog as far as South Africa was concerned. The South African government flourished in this environment, quickly pointing to all its conservation achievements when questions regarding its environment-related activities came up, while ignoring the detrimental environmental impact of its industrial and military activities. With little pressure from outside and limited criticism tolerated from inside its borders, the government went about dealing with the natural environment as though it was still an infinite resource.

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<sup>114</sup> Wiley, pp. 5-9; P.G.W. Henderson, *Environmental laws in South Africa* 2, pages numbered Conventions 1-Conventions 5.

<sup>115</sup> Henderson, pages numbered Conventions 1-Conventions 5.

#### 4.5 Non-governmental environmental activities in South Africa

On 17 October 1974, in his inaugural lecture as the newly appointed Shell Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Prof. Richard Fuggle identified complacency on the part of both the government and the public, as South Africa's major environmental problem. In his view South Africans in general lacked the interest and commitment necessary to address the plethora of environmental challenges that faced the country at the time. The major challenge was thus first to change this attitude if environmental problems such as pollution and soil conservation were to be addressed successfully.<sup>116</sup>

Fuggle's remarks should be viewed within the context of the time. Internationally radical changes had occurred in the official administration of environmental affairs while active public participation in environmental matters was at an all-time high. In South Africa, the Department of Planning and the Environment was just over twenty months old and was still concentrating mainly on physical planning and dividing the country's empty spaces up for future mining and industrial purposes.<sup>117</sup> Public participation was confined to the 50 odd ENGOs operating in the country, 26 of which were founded between 1965 and 1974.<sup>118</sup> That South Africa experienced an upsurge in non-governmental environmental activities from 1965 onwards has already been established in section 3.4. The problem, however, was not the number of ENGOs in existence, but the fact that many of them were ineffective and failed to rally support for their cause.<sup>119</sup> After 1974 the number of ENGOs sharply increased with 35 new organisations being founded between 1975 and 1982. The total number of ENGOs founded between 1972 and 1982 was 49.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> R.F. Fuggle, *Collision or rapprochement: environmental challenges in South Africa* (inaugural lecture, University of Cape Town, 17.10.1974), pp. 4-7.

<sup>117</sup> J.A. Pringle, *The conservationists and the killers: the story of game protection and the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa*, p. 278.

<sup>118</sup> See C.D. Schweizer, *Environmental and related interest groups in South Africa 2* (M.Sc. dissertation), pp. 3-59.

<sup>119</sup> Pringle, p. 277.

<sup>120</sup> Schweizer, 2, pp. 3-59.

According to Khan three national ENGOS, namely the NVT, the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa and the Botanical Society of South Africa (Botsoc) played the predominant role in the ENGO sector of the South African environmental movement. In her view, they were the main role-players which influenced environmental perceptions and they also determined the content of the prevailing environmental perspective in the country.<sup>121</sup> Khan is correct in her assumption that these three ENGOS played a significant role in influencing the environmental perceptions of the general public. Between 1972 and 1982 the Wildlife Society and Botsoc continued to be of major importance if growth in membership is taken as a measure of influence. The Wildlife Society especially experienced an unprecedented interest in its activities with membership growing from 8 554 in 1970 to over 20 000 members by 1982.<sup>122</sup> The NVT was not as fortunate and in his 1981 chairman's report, D.P. Ackerman voiced fears that the end of the organisation might be in sight.<sup>123</sup>

By crediting the Wildlife Society, Botsoc and the NVT with "determining the shape and content of the prevailing conservation ideology",<sup>124</sup> Khan ignores the role played by the Habitat Council (HC) from the time of its establishment on 5 March 1974 until 1982. Requests from the government to form a single co-ordinating council that would act as the united voice of the ENGO community, prompted the NVT and the South African Nature Union (SANU) to call a meeting of all interested and relevant parties. The meeting took place on 25 May 1973 in Scottburgh and the delegates unanimously agreed to form the Council for the Habitat (generally known as the Habitat Council). The HC was formally established in March 1974 and more than 50 ENGOS joined.<sup>125</sup>

The HC differed considerably from the NVT (which was predominantly agriculturally based), the Wildlife Society (English upper classes based) and Botsoc (botany

<sup>121</sup> K. Khan, *Contemporary South African environmental response: an historical and socio-political evaluation with particular reference to blacks* (M.A. dissertation), p. 95.

<sup>122</sup> Schweizer, 1, table 4.2, unnumbered page following p. 75; Pringle, p. 274.

<sup>123</sup> JGPDC, Habitat Council, Member organisations' annual reports: National Veld Trust, Chairman's Report 1981, 22.9.1981, pp. 1-2, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Khan, p. 95.

<sup>125</sup> Pringle, p. 198; C.D. Schweizer and K.H. Cooper, "Voluntary organisations and the environment" in Fuggle and Rabie (eds), pp. 138-139; JGPDC, Society for the Protection of the Environment: Minutes of the management committee, 28.3.1974; Interview: J. Giliomee, Stellenbosch, 26.3.1998.



orientated), in that its member organisations came from the whole environmental spectrum operating in South Africa. From the start it enjoyed a special relationship with the government which is reflected by the fact that the State President, Mr Jim Fouché, participated in the inaugural meeting in his official capacity. The existence of the HC seriously undermined the influence of individual ENGOs with the government and apart from the existing links with a few individual ENGOs, the government preferred rather to deal with the HC. It was also granted representation on several of the government's environment-related committees, boards and commissions. The government also made annual financial contributions towards the HC.<sup>126</sup>

Though only a co-ordinating council, the HC developed a character of its own and it became the most influential ENGO as far as the government was concerned. The latter played a prominent role in advancing the status of the HC, especially by granting it representation on the South African Committee on Environmental Conservation, making it the only ENGO to obtain this status. The government, determined to deal only with one voice from the public sector where environmental matters were concerned, also actively encouraged organisations to join the HC.<sup>127</sup> The HC played an important role in determining the environmental agenda through its thematic conferences that took place, at first annually and from 1980 bi-annually, at its annual general meetings. The first conference focused on coastal areas (1975),<sup>128</sup> and thereafter on mountain environments (1976),<sup>129</sup> on creating environmental awareness (1977),<sup>130</sup> on re-evaluating activities (1978),<sup>131</sup> roads and the environment (1980)<sup>132</sup> and on conservation policy statements (1982).<sup>133</sup> The HC occupied this influential and

<sup>126</sup> Pringle, p. 198; Schweizer and Cooper, pp. 138-139; Interview: J. Giliomee, Stellenbosch, 26.3.1998.

<sup>127</sup> J.J. Loots, "Opening address" in Council for the Habitat, *Coastal areas: conference proceedings 1. Durban, 3-4.4.1975*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>128</sup> See Council for the Habitat, *Coastal areas: conference proceedings 1. Durban, 3-4.4.1975*.

<sup>129</sup> See Council for the Habitat, *Mountain environments: conference proceedings 2. Johannesburg, 13-14.5.1976*.

<sup>130</sup> See Council for the Habitat, *Creating environmental awareness: conference proceedings 3. Stellenbosch, 5-6.4.1977*.

<sup>131</sup> See Council for the Habitat, *Activities in retrospect: conference proceedings 4. Johannesburg, 19.5.1978*.

<sup>132</sup> See Habitat Council, *Roads and the environment: conference proceedings 5. Johannesburg, 19.9.1980*.

<sup>133</sup> See Habitat Council, *Conservation: policy statements. Conference proceedings 6. Durban, 22.10.1982*.

privileged position until the beginning of 1983 when the statutory Council for the Environment was established in accordance with the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982). After that, the newly established Council undermined the HC's influence and put the latter on a path of steady decline.<sup>134</sup>

#### 4.5.1 Focus areas of South African ENGOS

Between 1972 and 1982, the majority of ENGOS were engaged in some sort of conservation orientated activity, concentrating on either the built or the natural environment. The period saw an unprecedented growth in community-based ENGOS like the Zwartkops Trust (1969), the Kleinmond Ecological Society (1978), the St Francis Bay-Kromme Trust (1981) and the Save Gordons Bay Society (1982). The aim of these organisations was the protection of the human and natural environment in specific areas, mainly along the coast where development plans or the possibility thereof threatened to alter the immediate environment in the areas.<sup>135</sup> Opposition to proposed developments was not confined to community-based ENGOS, but also led to co-operation between groups and individuals over a wider geographical area. Save the Garden Route Committee (SAGRACOM), for example, was founded in 1973 to oppose the building of a highway along the Garden Route.<sup>136</sup>

Flora conservation continued to be a favourite pastime of many South Africans with Botsoc and its numerous affiliated societies (e.g. the Eastern Province Wildflower Society, 1954, and the Clanwilliam Wildflower Society, 1971) being the leading organisations in this regard.<sup>137</sup> Groups such as the Tree Society of Southern Africa (1958), the Dendrological Foundation (1979) and the Dendrological Society (1981), on the other hand, were engaged in tree conservation and the promotion of indigenous

<sup>134</sup> Interview: F.R. Fuggle, Cape Town, 26.3.1998.

<sup>135</sup> Schweizer, 1, pp. 81-82. See also "People have the right to plan their environment" in *African Wildlife* 29(1), 1975, pp. 8-11.

<sup>136</sup> See for example "Knysna freeway: still in the balance?" in *African Wildlife* 28(1), 1974, pp. 21-22; "We meet Mr Driessen to discuss THAT freeway" in *African Wildlife* 28(3), 1974, p. 33.

<sup>137</sup> See for example R.A. Dyer, "Botanical research in South Africa in the twentieth century" in A.C. Brown (ed.), *A history of scientific endeavour in South Africa*, pp. 240-241; D. Hey, "The history and status of nature conservation in South Africa" in Brown (ed.), p. 152; Schweizer, 1, pp. 66-67.

trees.<sup>138</sup> The South African Ornithological Society (1930), the Cape Bird Club (1948) and the Bloemfontein Bird Club (1977) were among those ENGOs that promoted the conservation of bird life in the Republic. Coastal bird conservation also received attention through the South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB, 1968).<sup>139</sup>

Wildlife conservation remained important and popular with the general public. Three ENGOs, namely the Wildlife Society (1926),<sup>140</sup> the Southern African Nature Foundation (SANF, 1968)<sup>141</sup> and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT, 1973)<sup>142</sup> dominated non-governmental wildlife conservation activities in the country. The support base of the three organisations differed considerably from the Wildlife Society which operates on public support, whereas the EWT operates on public, corporate and institutional support, and the SANF on a corporate base only.<sup>143</sup> The Dolphin Action and Protection Group (1977), on the other hand, did very important and pioneering work in the conservation of dolphin and whale species in the South African territorial waters.<sup>144</sup>

A focus area that grew considerably between 1972 and 1982 was that of environmental education with environmental conservation incorporated into the syllabuses of black, coloured, Indian and white schools. Key role-players in the development of environmental education in South Africa were groups like the

<sup>138</sup> See for example M. Morison, "Tree Society of Southern Africa: a retrospective view" in *African Wildlife* 37(2), 1983, pp. 79-80; Schweizer, 2, pp. 22, 35.

<sup>139</sup> See for example Hey, p. 159; A.C. Brown, "The amateur scientist" in Brown (ed.), pp. 465-466; Schweizer, 1, pp. 67-69; SANCCOB, "SANCCOB: South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds. Who is SANCCOB?", <<http://www.exinet.co.za/enviro/sanccob/sanccob1.html>>, s.a.

<sup>140</sup> See for example Pringle, pp. 281-298; WESSA, "The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa", <<http://www.wildlifesociety.org.za/>>, s.a. See also its magazine, *African Wildlife*, for more details.

<sup>141</sup> See for example Schweizer and Cooper, p. 137; Hey, p. 158; J. Deacon, "Stigting vir bewaring" in *Suid-Afrikaanse Panorama* 34(10), November/December 1989, pp. 14-19. See also its magazine, *Our living world*, for more details.

<sup>142</sup> See for example "The Endangered Wildlife Trust reports..." in *African Wildlife* 32(2), 1978, pp. 27-29; EWT, "Endangered Wildlife Trust", <<http://www.infoweb.co.za/enviro/ewt.htm>>, 28.7.1997. See also its magazine, *Quagga*, for more details.

<sup>143</sup> The SANF's membership is limited to corporations only. It has no individual public members. Interview: I. McDonald, Stellenbosch, 1.4.1998.

<sup>144</sup> See for example Dolphin Action and Protection Group, *The Dolphin Action and Protection Group* (pamphlet), pp. 1-4; Interview: N. Rice, Fish Hoek, 1.4.1998. See also its newsletters *Dolphin and Whale News* and *Dolphin Whale Watch RSA* for more details.

Wilderness Leadership School (1963), the Wilderness Trust (1972), the South African Nature Conservation Centre (1975), the Wildlife Society, the NVT, the SANF and the anti-pollution groups.<sup>145</sup>

Concern about the high pollution levels in the country increased between 1972 and 1982. Anti-pollution groups such as the Institute for Water Pollution Control (1937), the National Association for Clean Air (1969) and the South African Council for Conservation and Anti-Pollution (1972) did important work in this field. The widespread problem of litter in the Republic led to the establishment of Keep South Africa Tidy (renamed Keep South Africa Beautiful) in 1971. Together with its individual branches and affiliates in the major cities, Keep South Africa Tidy embarked upon a campaign to promote a clean and tidy environment in the country, drawing support from both government and the container industry.<sup>146</sup> Concern about high pollution levels was not confined to the white population group, but also led to the founding of the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC) by Japhta Lekgetho in Soweto in 1977. NEAC's main objective was to promote environmental awareness in Soweto and to start with clean-up operations to reduce environmental pollution in the township.<sup>147</sup>

The development of the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station by Escom was not acceptable to all and a group of Capetonians formed Stop Koeberg in 1980. The organisation was later renamed Koeberg Alert, presumably because of their inability to actually stop the development of this nuclear power station.<sup>148</sup>

While many ENGOs tend to focus on a single issue within a specific geographical area, ENGOs did exist that addressed a broad environmental agenda. Probably the first ENGO to adopt such an agenda was the Society for the Protection of the Environment

<sup>145</sup> See for example Schweizer, 1, p. 82; D. Sullivan and R. Sullivan, *South African environment*, pp. 52-55, 58-59.

<sup>146</sup> See for example Schweizer, 1, p. 78; Sullivan and Sullivan, pp. 52-53; "Introducing Zibi - superbird with a super job - cleaning up South Africa" in *Veldtrust*, Autumn 1979, pp. 27-29.

<sup>147</sup> L. Lawson, "The ghetto and the greenbelt" in J. Cock and E. Koch (eds), *Going green: people, politics and the environment in South Africa*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>148</sup> Schweizer, 2, p. 52.

(SPE, 1970).<sup>149</sup> The SPE addressed a wide variety of issues ranging from campaigning against proposed developments in ecologically sensitive areas to campaigns against non-reusable containers, unchecked population growth, industrial expansion, road developments and pollution. It also actively campaigned, albeit in a more intellectual manner through letter writing and meetings, for environmental impact assessments during the planning phases of proposed developments.<sup>150</sup>

The established ENGOs such as the Wildlife Society and the NVT were not oblivious to the concerns of the environmental revolution, and both organisations adopted new agendas in the course of the seventies. In November 1973 the Wildlife Society formulated a new aim which directed the Society away from solely focusing on the conservation of wildlife towards broader issues that included the conservation of the earth, air, water, soil, plants and animals. The conversion to a broad environmental agenda took some time and the Society's main contributions remained in the wildlife conservation field. Despite many achievements between 1972 and 1982, its main contribution to the environmental movement in this period was the formulation of a conservation strategy for South Africa. Published first in 1978 as *A policy for strategy and environmental conservation in South Africa*, the policy was updated in 1979 and was published in 1980 under the title *A national strategy for environmental conservation in South Africa 1980*.<sup>151</sup> The NVT also began to address a wider range of environmental issues than before in the 1970s, while the HC, due to its diverse membership, could claim to have had a broad environmental agenda.

#### 4.5.2 The characteristics of South African ENGOs

Though ENGOs in South Africa differed with regards to their focus areas, the ENGOs operating in South Africa between 1972 and 1982 shared some common characteristics. An important characteristic of South African ENGOs in the period

<sup>149</sup> This would explain why Friends of the Earth approached the SPE in 1973 to support their campaign against commercial whaling and not the other more established ENGOs in the country. See JGPDC, Society for the Protection of the Environment: Minutes of management meeting, 10.4.1973.

<sup>150</sup> See JGPDC, Society for the Protection of the Environment: Minutes of management meetings, 8.9.1970-29.7.1982; *Society for the Protection of the Environment Newsletter* 1(1), 1971 - 12(4), 1982.

<sup>151</sup> Pringle, pp. 278, 295.

under discussion was their apolitical nature. There was the general tendency to keep the environment and politics separate; the link between the environment and politics, which had already been established elsewhere in the world by 1972, was therefore not yet made in South Africa and was even, in some instances, being resisted. The emphasis, despite changes in their focus areas, continued to fall predominantly on the natural environment, while an emphasis on the human environment with its social and political dimensions was remarkably absent in the Republic. Not only were ENGOs at fault here, but the government resisted any possible attempt to politicise environmental issues. The environment was not very high on the priority list of politicians and, in general, they preferred to keep it that way.<sup>152</sup>

The result of this apolitical nature of ENGO activities was the absence of highly publicised, confrontational and emotional campaigns that are generally associated with ENGOs such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth (FoE) and Earth First! The only possible exception to this is the little-known FoE branch that existed in South Africa around 1975. Following in the footsteps of FoE UK,<sup>153</sup> its main achievement seems to have been the dumping of an estimated 1 000 non-reusable cold drink containers in the lobby of a container manufacturer. Apart from this, little else is known about the FoE branch in South Africa, and from the consulted sources it was not possible to ascertain when they ceased to exist.<sup>154</sup>

A second characteristic of South African ENGOs was that they preferred to co-operate with, rather than oppose the government. Clashes between the ENGO community and the government did occur, but in general their relations with the government were on friendly terms. ENGOs like the HC, the NVT and Keep South Africa Tidy received annual grants from the government, while the NVT and the Wildlife Society had the State President as their patron until 1984. Khan identifies the height of ENGO and government co-operation as the joint publication of *The soldier and nature* (an

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<sup>152</sup> Khan, pp. 95-96.

<sup>153</sup> FoE UK's first direct action after its establishment in 1971, was the dumping of 1 500 non-returnable bottles outside the London offices of Cadbury Schweppes in May 1971. R. Lamb (in collaboration with Friends of the Earth), *Promising the earth*, pp. xv, 37-38.

<sup>154</sup> Schweizer, 1, p. 81. No specific information about the dumping of non-reusable cold drink containers was provided by the consulted source. No reference was made to this incident, or to the

undated booklet for the SADF) by the Wildlife Society and the SADF. The publication was partly funded by the SANF.<sup>155</sup>

A third characteristic of South African ENGOS was that their membership reflected the racial policies of the government and was restricted, in most cases, to whites only. Few exceptions such as the Wilderness Leadership School did exist, but in general ENGOS tended to keep people of colour out of their organisations. The need for ENGOS to cater for black people's environmental needs as well, were acknowledged prior to 1972 when the NVT established the African National Soil Conservation Association (ANSCA) and the Natal chapter of the Wildlife Society, the African Wildlife Society (AWS) (see section 3.3). Unfortunately these two organisations did not exist for very long, and black people were left without an environmental voice. Changes in the membership policy of the NVT and the Wildlife Society were introduced in 1984 and 1985 respectively, allowing people of colour to become members of their organisations for the first time.<sup>156</sup>

With the exception of NEAC, the environmental movement remained confined to the white population group. In black communities concern for the natural environment was a luxury few could afford in their daily struggle to make ends meet. Of more importance, amidst the government's ignorance of the needs of black people, were the community-based organisations, such as the Black Community Programmes set up by the BCM, which worked towards the provision of basic health and welfare services in black communities. It is doubtful, if given the opportunity, whether black people would have participated in the existing ENGOS, given the close relations the apartheid government had with environmental activities. The relocation of the Makulele community to unify the KNP in 1969, the persecution of black poachers in national parks and game reserves, and the involvement of the Department of Planning and the Environment in industrial decentralisation, to name but three aspects, did not make a positive contribution towards creating environmental awareness among black people.

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existence of a FoE branch in South Africa, in any of the other sources consulted in the research for this study.

<sup>155</sup> Khan, pp. 97-99.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Rather, it showed black communities that nature was more important to white people than black people were.<sup>157</sup>

#### 4.5.3 Major environmental issues pursued by South African ENGOs

Limited space does not allow for a comprehensive account of the plethora of environmental issues pursued by the various South African ENGOs between 1972 and 1982. A brief overview of the major issues will therefore have to suffice. While the rest of the world was up in arms against pollution, ENGOs in South Africa took up the struggle against developments of all sorts. Particular emphasis was placed on road developments after the government made its intention known to develop a Garden Route highway in 1973. This proposed development was strongly opposed by ENGOs such as SAGRACOM, the Wildlife Society and the SPE, which resulted in a confrontation between them and the government. Victory in the short term went to the ENGOs, but it was not their opposition that led the government to shelve the project until 1979. It was the oil crisis that began in October 1973 and the resulting speed and fuel restrictions that not only made the Garden Route highway, but also other proposed road developments, both unrealistic and unnecessary.<sup>158</sup>

Development plans were not restricted to roads only, but were also pursued within areas that were formally protected, either as nature and game reserves or as national parks. Dune mining and armaments testing within the boundaries of St Lucia were a problem for many ENGOs. The government's intolerant attitude towards criticism, however, meant that St Lucia would remain a problem for some years to come.<sup>159</sup> The most publicised campaign against developments in protected areas was that fought against the proposed coking coal mining in the KNP. Despite prospecting and mining

<sup>157</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 95-100 for more details on the environmental alienation of black people in South Africa.

<sup>158</sup> See *Society for the Protection of the Environment Newsletter* 3(2), 1973, pp. 1-21 for a detailed discussion of the confrontation between the ENGOs and the government. See also "Roads: problem number one?" in *African Wildlife* 27(3), 1973, p. 110; T. Coetzee, "Road building, environmental impact and South African historical writing", paper read at the 15<sup>th</sup> biennial conference of the South African Historical Society, Grahamstown, 1995. The Garden Route highway was eventually built in the early 1980s after a detailed environmental impact assessment had been conducted.

<sup>159</sup> See for example "Minister Koornhof hou beraad oor Mapelane" in *Veldtrust*, May 1975, pp. 9, 13; T.C. Robertson, "The ravishing of beautiful Mapelane" in *Veldtrust*, May 1975, pp. 8-11.



of any nature being prohibited in terms of the National Parks Act, the Department of Agriculture (under which the National Parks Board fell) gave the Department of Mines permission to prospect for coking coal in the KNP. It found sizeable deposits and by 1978 it seemed as though the government was willing to give up a third of the KNP to allow for the mining of coking coal to commence. This decision met with a lot of resistance from both ENGOS and the general public, and by 1980, due to public pressure, the government was forced to abandon its plans.<sup>160</sup> Though a success, the campaign left many ENGOS involved with wildlife conservation uneasy, for it highlighted the non-commitment of the government to environmental matters in general, and wildlife conservation in particular. It also left the question open that if the government was willing to sacrifice its flagship, the KNP, what protection did the other lesser known protected areas have against development projects?<sup>161</sup>

Despite a long conservation history several fauna and flora species achieved endangered status in the course of the 1970s. By 1972 the total number of mountain zebras was less than 100, black rhinoceros less than 400, roan antelope less than 350 and the brown hyena population was down to about 300. With three extinct species (the Cape lion, the blue buck and the quagga) already listed on the country's environmental track record, the government was none the less slow to address the problem of endangered species. It was up to ENGOS like the EWT, the Wildlife Society and the SANF to work towards improving the situation.<sup>162</sup> Environmental deterioration was not restricted to individual species, but was most evident on one of the biggest national assets, namely Table Mountain. By 1978 a commission of inquiry concluded that the general environment of Table Mountain and the Southern Peninsula Mountain Chain had deteriorated to such an extent that it could never be completely restored. Like so many other problems, the government had to be prompted by ENGOS, in particular those active in the Western Cape area, before real action was considered.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> See for example "Coal mining in the Kruger Park?" in *African Wildlife* 32(1), 1978, pp. 8-9; "It is wrong to mine the Kruger National Park" in *African Wildlife* 32(3), 1978, p. 8; "Minister Hendrik Schoeman asks: 'Is this fuss really necessary?'" in *African Wildlife* 32(3), 1978, pp. 16-17.

<sup>161</sup> Pringle, p. 277.

<sup>162</sup> Clarke, pp. 100-101.

<sup>163</sup> See *Report on the future control and management of Table Mountain and the Southern Peninsula Mountain Chain* for more details.

A recurrent issue in the environmental movement was the annual seal harvesting along the Atlantic coastline. The seal industry, being the oldest example of sustained exploitation of wild animals in Southern Africa and more than 300 years old, was completely controlled by the government. Widespread public opposition to seal culling led to the passing of the Sea Birds and Seals Protection Act (no 46 of 1973) in which the government extended some protection to seals. However, the annual harvesting continued.<sup>164</sup> The period also saw official protection of whales instituted when the government enacted regulations in this regard in 1980. These regulations made South Africa's laws to protect whales the strictest in the world, and were a direct result of campaigning by the Dolphin Action and Protection Group (DAPG). The DAPG also launched the Dolphin Whale Watch RSA project, which was linked to International Dolphin Watch, and which has proved to be very popular with the general public.<sup>165</sup>

While ENGOS, in general, were very active in the conservation of fauna and flora, few were active in the field of pollution. Favourite issues were littering and environmental marring (largely due to developments), but popular concern for air, water and radiation pollution remained very low. Groups such as the National Association for Clear Air did exist, but their close relationship with the government resulted in their voicing the opinion of the government rather than being a watchdog for the general public.<sup>166</sup> The Cleaner Air, Rivers and Environment (CARE) campaign run by *The Star* did more important work in the anti-pollution lobby than any ENGO could claim to have done between 1972 and 1982.

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<sup>164</sup> See for example R. Rand, "A case for controlled killing of the Cape fur seal" in *African Wildlife* 27(2), 1973, pp. 64-67; P.D. Shaughnessy, "Controversial harvest" in *African Wildlife* 30(6), 1976, pp. 26-31.

<sup>165</sup> Dolphin Action and Protection Group, pp. 2-3.

<sup>166</sup> Dr E.C. Halliday, the founder of the National Association for Clean Air, was also the chairman of the Air Pollution Advisory Committee. Halliday was very critical of all opinions lodged against the high air pollution levels in the big industrial areas in the country, quickly pointing out that on average South Africa was still better off than countries like the USA and Britain. See for example *The Star* (supplement), 30.3.1971, p. 1.

The majority of ENGOs in South Africa were engaged in some sort of conservation activity between 1972 and 1982. Important new developments, however, did take place which included the campaigns against the building of the Garden Route highway and the proposed coking coal mining in the KNP. These two campaigns, in particular, proved ENGOs willing to oppose the government on the one hand, while, on the other hand, they highlighted the government's inability to handle and accept criticism about their activities which impacted negatively on the environment.

The South African government, despite an increase in the activities of South African ENGOs, played the directional role in South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1982. This was due to the fact that, for the first time, the government officially determined the parameters within which ENGOs and the state itself were allowed to operate in respect of the environment. Though in no way comparable to developments in environmental administration in other parts of the globe, the milestones in the official administration of environmental affairs in South Africa between 1972 and 1982 were the "creation" of the Department of Planning and the Environment in 1973 and the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 100) in 1982. Despite many shortcomings, these two actions by the government were a step in the right direction and provided a base upon which improvements could be made in the next phase, lasting from 1982 to 1988, in South African environmentalism.

## CHAPTER 5

### ENVIRONMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1982-1988

The period 1982 to 1988 represents a transitional phase in the history of South African environmentalism. In the preceding period, the main concern was the institutionalisation of environmental affairs through a department of the environment and an environment conservation act. Between 1982 and 1988, on the other hand, environment-related activities increasingly focused on ways to improve upon those measures taken between 1972 and 1982.

Through the Department of Environment Affairs, the Council for the Environment and reports of the President's Council, the government continued to dominate the environmental movement in South Africa. It managed to maintain its position of dominance because of three factors: firstly, it led the investigations into ways to improve upon environment-related measures already in place; secondly, it started to investigate previously neglected fields like black urbanisation and demographic growth; thirdly, because of the internal political turmoil and the militarisation of the South African society, the government tolerated little criticism from white people in general. This left little room for environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS), still dominated by whites, to oppose governmental actions that had an adverse effect on the natural environment.

The non-governmental sector of the environmental movement in South Africa was still mainly concerned with the environmental needs of white people. However, important changes did occur within this sector which enabled it to start catering for the environmental needs of black and coloured people as well. Of particular importance was the emergence of community-based ENGOS among black and coloured communities to address the environmental concerns of people of colour. The academic community also made important contributions to the environmental movement in the period under discussion, especially through research conducted on air pollution in the Eastern Transvaal Highveld.

### 5.1 The Department of Environment Affairs

The official administration of environmental affairs in South Africa remained fragmented between 1982 and 1988. Nine ministries,<sup>1</sup> the four provincial administrations and local authorities were all directly involved in administering environment-related acts or provincial and local regulations. This fragmented official administration impacted negatively on the Department of Environment Affairs in that it made the creation of a strong centralised government department, dealing exclusively with the South African environment, impossible.<sup>2</sup>

Even if the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982) allowed for the creation of a strong, centralised Department of Environment Affairs, it is doubtful if this goal would have been attainable. The organisational structure of the Department between 1980 and 1984 did not make the creation of a single departmental identity possible. This was mainly due to the fact that the Department was run as though it was still two government departments (i.e. of Water Affairs and of Forestry and Environmental Conservation), which just happened to share the same Directorate of Administration.

Between 1980 and 1984 the Department was divided into three directorates, namely of Administration, of Water Affairs, and of Forestry. Environmental Conservation was but a branch of the Directorate of Forestry and, if budget allowances can be taken as a measure of importance, it was not considered to be an important section within the Department. The voted budget allowance for the Environmental Conservation Branch was only 3,63% of the total budget of the Department of Environment Affairs in 1981-1982, 3,91% in 1982-1983, and 4,6% in 1983-1984.<sup>3</sup> The main functions of

<sup>1</sup> The Ministries of Environment Affairs and Fisheries, of Constitutional Development and Planning, of Agriculture, of Health and Welfare, of Transport Affairs, of Mineral and Energy Affairs, of Community Development, of Manpower, and of Education.

<sup>2</sup> J.G.S. Malan, M.A. Rabie and R.F. Fuggle, "Official administration of environmental affairs" in R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental concerns in South Africa: technical and legal perspectives*, pp. 121-126.

<sup>3</sup> *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1981-1982* (RP 105/1982), pp. 4, 21; *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1982-1983* (RP 58/1984), p. 23 and unnumbered page following p. 4; *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1983-1984* (RP 28/1985), p. 11 and unnumbered page following p. 4.

the branch were the co-ordination of all government environment-related activities and the provision of a secretariat for the Council for the Environment.<sup>4</sup>

The independent nature of the non-administrative directorates within the Department was acknowledged only in 1984 when the Directorate of Water Affairs became a full-fledged state department.<sup>5</sup> In this respect 1984 can be considered a turning point in the history of the Department of Environment Affairs. Changes made to its organisational structure after Water Affairs "broke away", took away the directorate status of Forestry which consequently became the Forestry Branch. This change in structure meant that the various sections of the Department became equal for the first time, which in future would enable it to develop its own unique identity. Between 1984 and 1988 the department consisted of five identifiable sections, namely Administration, Forestry, Environmental Conservation, Marine Development, and Meteorological Services (from 1 October 1985). Notable additions to its functions included the transfer of the responsibility for South Africa's research activities on Antarctica and on Marion and Gough Islands, the combating of oil pollution at sea, and the *S.A. Agulhas* (an Antarctic survey and supply vessel) from the Department of Transport to the Department of Environment Affairs in 1985.<sup>6</sup>

An important development within the Department was the adoption of an environmental philosophy that would henceforth determine priorities and focus areas. In accordance with the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) of 1980, the Department set out to achieve three main objectives from 1987 onwards, namely "the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life-supporting systems, the maintenance of genetic diversity, and the assurance of the sustainable utilisation of species and ecosystems".<sup>7</sup> The WCS remained the single most important environmental document for the Department and the South African government up until the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992). By doing so

<sup>4</sup> Malan, Rabie and Fuggle, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1984-1985* (RP 44/1986), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1985-1986* (RP 32/1987), pp. 1, 12, 114, 127. See also *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1986-1987* (RP 119/1987); *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1987-1988* (RP 114/1988); *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1988-1989* (RP 32/1990).

<sup>7</sup> RP 114/1988, p. 47. Compare with IUCN, UNEP and WWF, *World Conservation Strategy: living resource conservation for sustainable development*, p. vi.

the Department neglected to address the changes that had occurred in world environmental thought and management after the publication of the Brundtland Commission's report, *Our common future*, in 1987. It thus linked up with an environmental strategy that by the end of 1987 was considered to be outdated (see section 2.7.1).<sup>8</sup>

Notable successes of the Department between 1982 and 1988 include the creation of the South African Natural Heritage Programme (SANHP). The SANHP was launched on 7 November 1984 as a co-operative venture between the Department of Environment Affairs, the four provincial nature conservancies, the Southern African Nature Foundation (SANF) and Telemecanique (the founder sponsor, now Schneider).<sup>9</sup> The SANHP's main aim was (and still is) to encourage and assist private landowners in the country to conserve the natural environment. Within the Programme private landowners remain in full control of their property, but they undertake to inform the Department of Environment Affairs of any planned changes to the natural environment. The first site was registered in 1985 and is listed as "Annex Plattekloof (Portion 3 of Lot B)". It is a 24 ha site, in the Cape Town area, owned by Escom and aimed at protecting the endangered *Serruria ciliata* and the rare *Erica ferrea* plants. By March 1989 a total of 96 natural heritage sites had been approved and registered with the SANHP.<sup>10</sup>

Other important activities of the Department included the development of a National Plan for Nature Conservation and the corresponding national atlas of critical environmental components. The latter's aims were to serve as a guide in the identification of critical environmental components, to provide a forum for interaction between researcher and developer, and to establish an environmental information system.<sup>11</sup> Pollution also received some attention from the Department through annual financial contributions to Keep South Africa Tidy, the drafting of regulations aimed at

<sup>8</sup> See for example I. Davis, "The Natal Parks Board" in *South African Panorama* 32(10), October 1987, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> J. Malan and M. Wahl, *South African Natural Heritage sites open to the public*, p. 5; J. Malan and M. Wahl, *Annual report of the South African Natural Heritage Programme, 1996-1997*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> R. Soutter, "The South African Natural Heritage Programme" in *African Wildlife* 40(1), 1986, pp. 16-17; "Heritage 100. Founder sponsors of the SA Natural Heritage Programme: Telemecanique" in *Parks and Grounds* 50, 1989, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Environment Affairs, *National atlas of critical environmental components (National Plan for Nature Conservation)*, pp. 1-3.

controlling noise pollution and waste management, and annual grants made to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). It further attempted to promote environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for all proposed developments. However, its work in this field was seriously restricted by the 1980 governmental decision that EIAs should be voluntary and not compulsory.<sup>12</sup>

Between 1982 and 1988 the Department of Environment Affairs underwent important structural changes which enabled it to start developing a character of its own. By 1988, however, it was neither an important nor a strong department within governmental structures. This was mainly due to the fact that the government had more important political and economic matters to attend to in the period, and because the Department itself was in its infancy and was still trying to come to grips with exactly what its responsibilities would be. The weaknesses of the Department, in turn, enabled one of its statutory bodies, the Council for the Environment, to dominate most of the environment-related activities of the South African government.

## 5.2 The Council for the Environment

The single most important environment-related government body between 1982 and 1988 was the statutory Council for the Environment. Established on 7 July 1982 in terms of the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982), its main function was to advise the Minister of Environment Affairs "on the co-ordination of all actions directed at or liable to have an influence on any matter affecting the conservation and utilisation of the environment".<sup>13</sup> The Council consisted of a maximum of 25 members, four nominated by the Provincial Administrators (one each for the provinces), while the Minister appointed the rest of its members.<sup>14</sup>

The statutory Council for the Environment differed from its namesake predecessor in that its members were not government officials, but were drawn mainly from the private sector. All members were either environmental experts or people that would,

<sup>12</sup> EIAs only became compulsory in South Africa in 1998. RP 58/1984, pp. 200, 203; RP 28/1985, pp. 195, 198; RP 44/1986, pp. 51, 55; RP 32/1987, p. 101; RP 119/1987, p. 126; RP 114/1988, pp. 49, 51, 54.

<sup>13</sup> *Annual report of the Council for the Environment, 1986* (RP 36/1987), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Eerste verslag van die Raad vir die Omgewing, 7 Julie 1982 - 30 September 1984* (RP 42/1985), p. 1.



in the Minister's opinion, be able to make a substantial contribution towards environmental conservation. According to Richard Fuggle, the membership base of the Council was the strength of the body because it gave the Minister direct access to expert opinions on the environment. It also provided a forum where more complicated environmental issues could be debated and acted upon, and where environmental policy could be formulated. Well-known South African environmental experts such as Fuggle (1982-1994), Prof. W.R. Siegfried (1982-1994), Prof. M.A. Rabie (1982-1992), Dr G.T. Fagan (1982-1994) and Dr D. Hey (1982-1989) were included in the Council. It stood under the chairmanship of Prof. P.R. Botha (1982-1994) who, at the time of his appointment as chairman, also chaired the Habitat Council.<sup>15</sup>

Though only an advisory body, the general lack of professional expertise within the Department of Environment Affairs (the latter was often criticised for performing a predominantly administrative role),<sup>16</sup> enabled the Council to become the leading role-player within governmental structures.<sup>17</sup> Between 1982 and 1988 the Council did pioneering work in numerous environmental fields such as environmental policy, waste control, noise impact studies, the urban environment, coastal and marine conservation, environmental education and legislation. Specific issues investigated include, *inter alia*, municipal noise and the combating thereof, open spaces in urban environments, the conservation and management of wetlands, EIAs, integrated environmental management, off-road vehicles in coastal zones, a national environmental education policy, and the shortcomings in the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1982).<sup>18</sup> Final documents on the major issues addressed between 1982 and 1988 were published in 1989.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Interview: R.F. Fuggle, Cape Town, 26.3.1998; *Council for the Habitat Newsletter*, January 1983, p. 1. See *Council for the Environment: annual report, 1994 and overview of activities, 1982 to 1993* (RP 200/1994), pp. 21-22 for a complete list of all the members of the Council between 1982 and 1994.

<sup>16</sup> See for example the interview with Prof. R.F. Fuggle, published as "Pretoria and the professionals" in *Environmental Action*, September 1990, pp. 26-29.

<sup>17</sup> *Report of the Committee on the restructuring of the Council for the Environment and other related matters*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> RP 200/1994, pp. 21-37.

<sup>19</sup> See for example Council for the Environment, *Guidelines for environmental conservation and environmental creation in structure planning for the urban environment*; Raad vir die Omgewing, *Geïntegreerde omgewingsbestuur in Suid-Afrika*; Raad vir die Omgewing, 'n *Benadering tot 'n nasionale omgewingsbeleid en strategie vir Suid-Afrika*.

The main shortcoming of the Council for the Environment was its advisory status. The Minister of Environment Affairs often ignored its advice and reports, while the tension that existed between the Council and some of the Directors General of the Department undermined its effectiveness. (Some Directors General felt that the Council was trespassing on departmental terrain and tried their best to isolate the Council.) With no executive powers of its own, the usefulness of the Council's work was determined by politicians who, more often than not, had little knowledge and understanding of the processes of the natural environment, and who were part of a bigger system in which the environment was not a top priority.<sup>20</sup>

### 5.3 Reports of the President's Council

The Planning, Scientific and Constitutional Affairs Committees of the President's Council made important contributions to the environmental movement in South Africa between 1982 and 1988. The President's Council was established on 1 January 1981 as a direct result of recommendations tabled by the Schlebusch Commission<sup>21</sup> in May 1980. In accordance with these recommendations, the multiracial President's Council replaced the Senate in 1981 to provide a forum where new political ideas could be debated.<sup>22</sup>

The five committees of the President's Council investigated various issues on request of the State President, four of which were of value to the environmental movement.<sup>23</sup> On 2 June 1982 the Planning Committee was requested by the State President to advise him on the state of nature conservation in South Africa and on the principles according to which priorities could be determined between conservation and development. Both reports were tabled in 1984. The *Report of the Planning*

<sup>20</sup> *Report of the Committee on the restructuring of the Council for the Environment and other related matters*, pp. 9-10, 15-16; Interview: R.F. Fuggle, Cape Town, 26.3.1998; Interview: J. Clarke, Johannesburg, 5.3.1998.

<sup>21</sup> Alwyn Schlebusch headed the Commission of Inquiry into the Constitution appointed in 1979.

<sup>22</sup> B. Pottinger, *The imperial presidency: P.W. Botha, the first ten years*, pp. 100-101; J.S. Rademeyer, "Die rol van Alwyn Schlebusch in die totstandkoming van die nuwe politieke bedeling, 1978-1983" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 23(1), June 1998, pp. 112, 115, 116-121.

<sup>23</sup> Rabie and Fuggle identify only the two reports of the Planning Committee as being relevant to the environmental movement. However, the reports on demography and black urbanisation addressed key environmental problems and will thus be included in the discussion. M.A. Rabie and R.F. Fuggle, "The rise of environmental concern" in R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental management in South Africa*, p. 20.

*Committee of the President's Council on Nature Conservation in South Africa* acknowledged the inviolate status of proclaimed nature conservation areas. However, it concluded that if the survival of the nation were ever at stake, nature conservation would have to become a secondary objective.<sup>24</sup> It further recommended the consolidation of all environmental legislation in order to formulate a broad environmental policy and that urgent attention be paid to the proclamation of more marine conservation areas. The need for environmental education programmes; the conservation of the littoral; regional and international co-operation, and addressing South Africa's high population growth were also emphasised. The Report acknowledged the central role played by the Council for the Environment by recommending that the Council and not the Department of Environment Affairs deal with the majority of recommendations set out in the Report. In line with official governmental policy, the Report recommended that EIAs be carried out when major developments could harm the natural environment. However, the Report stipulated that the Planning Committee was not in favour of the legal enforcement of such studies.<sup>25</sup>

The *Report of the Planning Committee of the President's Council on Priorities between Conservation and Development* explored the possibility of enforcing EIAs further. It concluded that for proven or planned growth areas, guide plans should be drawn up in which conservation considerations should be taken into account. Developments within a guide plan area should then comply with the provisions set out in the plan. EIAs were recommended for major developments outside growth areas and inside existing conservation areas. The Report also emphasised the need to involve all the various cultures (and thus racial groups) in the country in conservation and the need to decentralise the conservation activities to enable community involvement in conservation decisions.<sup>26</sup> The main conclusion of the Report was that conservation and development were not mutually exclusive, but, if properly planned, could co-exist harmoniously. The key factor in the relationship between the two

<sup>24</sup> This should be viewed against the background of the resistance from ENGOs against proposals to mine coking coal in the Kruger National Park and the development of a weapons testing range in the De Hoop Nature Reserve along the Southern Cape coast.

<sup>25</sup> *Report of the Planning Committee of the President's Council on nature conservation in South Africa* (PC 2/1984), pp. 164-173.

<sup>26</sup> This was partially realised in 1987 with the devolution of some of the Department of Environment Affairs' functions to the provincial nature conservancies. RP 119/1987, p. 3.

processes was that the development aims of individuals and/or communities should not exceed the inherent limitations of the natural environment.<sup>27</sup>

The remaining two investigations of importance to this study were conducted by the Constitutional Affairs and the Scientific Committees respectively. Both reports addressed issues (demographic trends and black urbanisation) which were previously neglected by the government and which had far-reaching effects on the natural environment. In the *Report of the Science Committee of the President's Council on Demographic Trends in South Africa* (1983), the Committee concluded that if the South African population continued to grow at the existing rate of 2,6% p.a., the consequences would be severe for the country. The Report stated that the existing population was already placing pressure on the national economy and that it was increasingly difficult to provide employment for all. It further estimated that the country's natural resources would be able to sustain a maximum population of 80 million people, and it was projected that the country would reach that point in the year 2020. The Report recommended state intervention to retard population growth and stressed the importance of educational campaigns to inform all racial groups of sound family planning.<sup>28</sup>

Of equal importance was the *Report of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs of the President's Council on an Urbanisation Strategy for the Republic of South Africa* (1985). The Report concentrated on the physical, economic and social phenomena and problems associated with black urbanisation within "white" South Africa. Its main conclusion was that the government should shift its emphasis from limiting black urban growth to the accommodation of and the planning for black urbanisation, which included the provision of housing, education, local developments and employment opportunities, to name but a few priorities.<sup>29</sup> It also recommended the abolition of influx control (established in terms of section 27 of the Native Laws Amendment Act

<sup>27</sup> *Report of the Planning Committee of the President's Council on priorities between conservation and development* (PC 5/1984), pp. 58-66.

<sup>28</sup> *Verslag van die Wetenskapskomitee van die Presidentsraad oor demografiese tendense in Suid-Afrika* (PR 1/1983), pp. 212-236.

<sup>29</sup> *Report of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs of the President's Council on an urbanisation strategy for the Republic of South Africa* (PC 3/1985), pp. 1, 142, 198.

no 54 of 1952)<sup>30</sup> and that all South Africans should have freedom of movement to live and work wherever they wished. The government accepted this recommendation and influx control was duly abolished in 1986.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note that the motivation behind the demographic and urbanisation investigations was not a concern for the impact thereof on the natural environment. Rather, the government was motivated by social, economic and political considerations which, by the 1980s, necessitated different demographic and urbanisation strategies. Even though the investigations were not aimed explicitly at improving the South African environment, control of the two processes is an inherent part of any broad environmental policy. The formulation of new strategies for both processes was a step in the right direction and it provided a basis upon which improvements could be made when urbanisation and population growth became environmental issues in the 1990s.

#### **5.4 Factors that influenced the government's environmental efforts**

The period 1982 to 1988 represents a political and economically unstable phase in the history of South Africa, which in turn impacted negatively on the government's environmental efforts. It is important to focus briefly on the domestic, regional and international factors that influenced governmental actions between 1982 and 1988.

Domestically, the government was confronted with unprecedented resistance from black, coloured and Indian people against the policy of apartheid. This resistance of the 1980s took on many forms such as school, rent, consumer and bus boycotts, as well as armed resistance. The riots left many townships under the control of various anti-apartheid resistance groups, but the resistance did not succeed in its aim to end

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<sup>30</sup> The influx control policy placed restrictions on the freedom of movement of black people within South Africa. These restrictions included regulations that forbade black people to remain in urban areas for longer than 72 hours without permission from the authorities. Black people also had to obtain permission before being allowed to work in urban areas. See section 27 of the Native Laws Amendment Act no 54 of 1952 in *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1952*, pp. 811, 813, 815.

<sup>31</sup> N. Worden, *The making of modern South Africa: conquest, segregation and apartheid* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 123-124. See PC 3/1985, pp. 196-216 for a summary of the recommendations. After the abolition of influx control, black urbanisation increased from an estimated 20 000 p.a. (1980-1985) to an estimated 360 000 p.a. M. Ramphela, " 'New day rising' " in M. Ramphela and C. McDowell (eds), *Restoring the land: environment and change in post-apartheid South Africa*, p. 5.

white minority rule in the country. The government, on the other hand, managed to hold onto its political control, but failed to restore law and order in many parts of the country.<sup>32</sup> The political instability mainly found expression in black-on-black violence, rather than in black-on-white or white-on-black violence. The violence was largely the result of vigilante and counter-vigilante violence that erupted in 1985 and slowly drew various regions (notably KwaZulu/Natal) into a low intensity civil war. By 1988, this form of violence was the cause of over 90% of unrest-related deaths in South Africa.<sup>33</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the government was not confined to people of colour. The political reform measures introduced by the government in the course of the 1980s, such as the Constitutional Affairs Amendment Act of 1985 and the Abolition of Influx Control Act of 1986, met serious resistance from white right-wing political groupings like the Conservative Party. On the other hand, other political groupings, such as the left-wing Progressive Federal Party, felt that some of the measures such as the proposed changes to the Group Areas Act of 1966 did not go far enough.<sup>34</sup> The government reacted to these and other forms of resistance in a number of ways which included, *inter alia*, declaring two states of emergency (21 July 1985 - 7 March 1986 and 12 June 1986 - June 1990), the banning and restricting of organisations and curtailing the freedom of the press.<sup>35</sup>

In the Southern Africa region, South Africa's involvement in the conflict in Angola and the freedom struggle in South West Africa (SWA) went from full-scale involvement in 1982 to the signing of a trilateral agreement with Angola and Cuba in December 1988. In terms of the treaty the parties undertook to implement United Nations (UN) Resolution 435, which demanded an independent SWA/Namibia, on

<sup>32</sup> See for example B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, pp. 498-509; A. Sparks, *The mind of South Africa: the story of the rise and fall of apartheid*, pp. 329-361; Worden, pp. 126-134.

<sup>33</sup> See N. Haysom, "Manufacturing violent stability: vigilantes and the policing of South Africa" in M. Coleman (ed.), *A crime against humanity: analysing the repression of the apartheid state*, pp. 112-117.

<sup>34</sup> Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 488-498.

<sup>35</sup> See for example M. Coleman (ed.), *A crime against humanity: analysing the repression of the apartheid state*, pp. 85-95; A. Armstrong, "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil: media restrictions and the state of emergency" in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds), *South African review* 4 (2<sup>nd</sup> impression), pp. 199-214; D. Webster, "Repression and the state of emergency" in Moss and Obery (eds), pp. 141-172.

1 April 1989.<sup>36</sup> South Africa's involvement in the region was not limited to Angola and SWA only. The government in its fight against the African National Congress (ANC), ordered several cross-border attacks on known and presumed ANC bases in neighbouring countries. This included the attack by the South African Defence Force (SADF) on ANC offices and houses in Gaborone, Botswana, on 14 June 1985. South Africa also imposed a partial blockade on Lesotho in January 1986 which contributed directly to the downfall of the anti-South African Lesotho leader, Chief Leabua Jonathan. During the blockade, Jonathan was replaced in a military coup d'état (the first in Southern Africa) by the pro-South African Maj. Gen. Justin Lekhanya.<sup>37</sup>

Internationally, South Africa's economic and political isolation reached new heights after State President P.W. Botha's disastrous Rubicon speech on 15 August 1985. Contrary to speculations in the international political community and media that Botha would announce far-reaching changes to the apartheid policy, Botha reaffirmed the government's commitment to the political system in place. He also rejected the principle of "one-man one-vote" as well as a fourth chamber of parliament<sup>38</sup> to represent black people.<sup>39</sup>

The Rubicon speech impacted negatively on South Africa's foreign economic and political relationships. The value of the Rand fell overnight from US 44,5 cents to US 38,5 cents, and by 28 August 1985 was down to US 35 cents. A sharp decline in the value of shares forced the Johannesburg Stock Exchange to close shop for three days, while the government placed restrictions on the outward flow of capital. External pressures on the South African economy came in the form of the suspension of foreign loans (led by the US Chase Manhattan Bank), massive foreign disinvestment and the imposition of more extensive trade sanctions against the country. Due to public pressure at home, South Africa's allies in the international political arena, namely Ronald Reagan (United States of America - USA) and

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<sup>36</sup> See Liebenberg and Spies, pp. 533-540 for more details.

<sup>37</sup> J. Barber and J. Barratt, *South Africa's foreign policy: the search for status and security, 1945-1988*, pp. 315-320.

<sup>38</sup> After the constitutional changes of 1983 the South African parliament consisted of three chambers, one each for the white, coloured and Indian population groups.

<sup>39</sup> Barber and Barratt, pp. 320-326.

Margaret Thatcher (Great Britain), also started to assume a more critical stance towards the Republic.<sup>40</sup>

The internal and external political and economic distractions between 1982 and 1988, as in the preceding period, ensured that the environment remained largely a non-issue with the government. At stake was the survival of white political domination in South Africa, and the government invested the maximum amount of resources and time in the struggle to maintain the *status quo*. As far as the environment was concerned, two of these resources were ivory and rhinoceros horn. The only problem was that trade in the former was restricted and trade in the latter banned in terms of the classification system of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, Washington, 1973) of which South Africa was a member nation.<sup>41</sup>

News of South Africa's involvement in illicit ivory and rhinoceros horn smuggling were made public on 14 July 1988 when Craig van Note from Monitor (the US Conservation, Environmental and Animal Welfare Consortium) presented a written statement to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee of the US Congress. Van Note accused South Africa of being one of the "largest wildlife outlaws in the world" and implicated the SADF in the annihilation of the African elephant herds in Angola and Mozambique. The latter was done by allowing and providing for the transportation of illegal ivory and rhinoceros horn from Angola and Namibia to South Africa, and by assisting the Resistência Nacional de Moçambique (Renamo) rebels in Mozambique to dispose of their ivory stocks.<sup>42</sup> Two months later, on 5 September 1988, *The Star* reported that Dr Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the União Nacional para a Independência

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Trade in elephant products was banned only in 1989 when the African elephant was moved from Appendix II to Appendix I. *Vrye Weekblad*, 15-21.11.1991, p. 34; G. Jones, "Black rhino poaching" in *The South African Journal of Environmental Law and Policy* 3(2), October 1996, p. 177; A. Hall-Martin, "Rhino and elephant conservation: the SA connection" in *Conserva* 5(5), September 1990, pp. 4-7.

<sup>42</sup> Jan Giliomee Private Document Collection (JGPDC), Habitat Council: C. van Note, Statement on US enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, 14.7.1988, pp. 10-12.



Total de Angola (UNITA), had told a journalist that UNITA had had to pay for South African aid in diamonds, timber and ivory.<sup>43</sup>

These allegations received wide publicity and on 31 August 1988 the SADF ordered an internal military inquiry into the matter, headed by Brig. Ben de Wet Roos. The final report was submitted in November 1988 and, apart from a press statement, was never made public. The Roos Inquiry concluded that the SADF was not involved in the killing of elephants, but that for an eighteen-month period from mid-1978 to the end of 1979, it transported and sold small quantities of ivory (500 tusks/1 700kg) for UNITA in an officially sanctioned operation. However, allegations persisted and the government appointed a Commission of Inquiry on 7 October 1994 with Appeal Judge Mark Kumleben as its sole member. The final report was tabled in January 1996.<sup>44</sup>

The Kumleben report concluded that the Military Intelligence Division of the SADF was directly involved in the transportation and selling of illegal ivory from mid-1978 until the beginning of 1980. From June 1980 till 1986 the SADF used a front company, Framatrade (Pty) Ltd, to continue with the trade in illicit ivory and rhinoceros horn obtained from UNITA. The main collection point was Rundu in the Caprivi Strip (SWA), from where the contraband was transported via air and road to South Africa. The SADF issued instructions that Framatrade vehicles should not be searched and provided air transport for some of the contraband. The Report further concluded that this operation had been approved at top governmental level. Concerning Mozambique, the Commission found no evidence to support the allegations of Van Note that South Africa was assisting Renamo in the illegal smuggling of ivory.<sup>45</sup>

South Africa's involvement in the illegal smuggling of ivory and rhinoceros horn was problematic for at least two important reasons. Firstly, by assisting in and providing for the smuggling to continue, the country indirectly contributed to the massive

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<sup>43</sup> *The Star*, 5.9.1988 as quoted by M.E. Kumleben, *Commission of Inquiry into the alleged smuggling of and illegal trade in ivory and rhinoceros horn in South Africa*, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Kumleben, pp. 1, 9, 40-43.

<sup>45</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 46-60 for more details. See also J. Breytenbach, *Eden's exiles: one soldier's fight for paradise*, pp. 246-255 for a personal account of the secrecy that surrounded the SADF's involvement.

reduction of the African elephant population from an estimated 1,3 million elephants in 1979 to an estimated 600 000 by 1989. The black rhinoceros population declined even more dramatically from an estimated 65 000 in 1970 to just over 3 000 by 1989. This massive decline in the African elephant and black rhinoceros populations was due mainly to poaching, which the government indirectly sanctioned by buying the available merchandise.<sup>46</sup>

Secondly, South Africa is a founding member of CITES which came into effect in 1975 to promote the necessary international co-operation to protect endangered fauna and flora species against overexploitation by international trade. In terms of the Convention, countries were allowed to trade in legal ivory, i.e. ivory of which the origin could be accounted for. (In South Africa legal ivory came mainly, but not exclusively, from the Kruger National Park's annual culling programme.) Trade in poached ivory was classified as illegal and member nations agreed to refrain from participating in any such activities. While the trade in ivory was controlled, CITES totally prohibited the trade in rhinoceros horn from its inception in 1975.<sup>47</sup>

Through its involvement in the illicit smuggling of ivory and rhinoceros horn, South Africa thus acted against the provisions of CITES. In doing so the government seriously undermined the image of the country within the international environmental movement. Under the spotlight again, were longstanding allegations that South Africa was being used as a clearing house for wildlife contraband. These allegations were initially made mainly because of unsatisfactory South African customs and border controls, but, after news of the ivory scandal broke, the government was implicated as being directly involved in these illegal practices. For a country that had little status and standing within the international political arena by 1988, this scandal seriously affected the image of South Africa as a conservation-minded country, and it further affected its prestige within conservation circles and with foreign tourists.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Hall-Martin, p. 5; Jones, p. 177; C. Curzon, "The plunder of South Africa's heritage" in *African Panorama*, Special environmental issue, [1995], pp. 33-35.

<sup>47</sup> Curzon, p. 34; "White gold trade" in *African Wildlife* 34(3), 1980, p. 34; L. van Niekerk, "Sleuths for the survival of endangered species" in *Conserva* 7(6), November/December 1992, pp. 16-17; JGPDC, Habitat Council: C. van Note, Statement on US enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, 14.7.1988, pp. 9-12.

<sup>48</sup> Kumleben, pp. 12-16; Curzon, p. 34; Van Niekerk, pp. 16-17; JGPDC, Habitat Council: C. van Note, Statement on US enforcement of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, 14.7.1988, pp. 9-12.

### 5.5 Non-government environmental activities

The six years between 1982 and 1988 can be regarded as a transitional period in which existing environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) gradually started to change their agendas to reflect the political and social realities of the time. Probably the most important change was that made to the membership policies of mainstream ENGOS such as the Wildlife Society and the National Veld Trust (NVT) which opened up their organisations to people of colour in 1984 and 1985 respectively.<sup>49</sup> By adopting a non-racial membership policy, mainstream ENGOS acknowledged that the improvement of the state of the South African environment depended on the co-operation of all the racial groups and not just white people.

Changes in membership policies did not all of a sudden result in large numbers of black, coloured and Indian people joining the previously white ENGOS. Farieda Khan, in a study on black environmental perceptions, pointed out that the political and economic marginalisation of black people over the years had cultivated a negative attitude towards environmental issues among them. The inability and at times unwillingness of white ENGOS to address those issues important to black people, such as poverty, provision of basic services and lack of land, coupled with the participation of some ENGOS in activities in which black people were denied access to their traditional land and resources, further ensured a negative attitude towards white ENGOS among black people.<sup>50</sup> Although an important first step, constitutional changes alone therefore did not guarantee black participation in mainstream ENGOS.

As a result, the non-governmental section of the environmental movement continued to be dominated by white people between 1982 and 1988. English speakers in turn dominated white participation with a disproportionately lower number of Afrikaans speakers active in the environmental field.<sup>51</sup> The Wildlife Society, for example,

<sup>49</sup> F. Khan, *Contemporary South African environmental response: an historical and socio-political evaluation with particular reference to blacks* (M.A. dissertation), p. 98.

<sup>50</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 47-60 for a discussion of the effect of apartheid legislation on black environmental perceptions and attitudes.

<sup>51</sup> J.F. du Preez, "Die rol van vrywillige bewaringsorganisasies", paper read at the SADF seminar, Meerdoelinge grondgebruik: die rol van sekondêre bewaringsgebiede in die RSA, 27-28.7.1988, p. 9.

discontinued the publication of a separate Afrikaans edition of its magazine *African Wildlife* in 1983 due to lack of interest. The Society did state its intention to take up the publication of an Afrikaans edition again if and when they have succeeded in attracting a much larger number of Afrikaans-speaking members.<sup>52</sup>

Though white ENGOs dominated the non-governmental environmental activities, two important role-players emerged in the course of the 1980s, namely black community-based environmental organisations and the academic community through their research into environmental problems. Together, the predominantly white ENGOs, the black community-based ENGOs and the academic community constituted the non-governmental sector of the environmental movement in South Africa between 1982 and 1988. It is therefore important to briefly discuss these three components.

#### **5.5.1 The predominantly white ENGOs**

The creation of the Council for the Environment seriously undermined the influence of the Habitat Council (HC) as the most influential ENGO from 1983 onwards. (See also section 4.5.) Two factors contributed to this situation. Firstly, the public and many HC member organisations saw the Council for the Environment as taking over the role of the HC. This perception, though unfounded, was enhanced by the fact that Roelf Botha, the president of the HC, was appointed as chairman of the newly established Council for the Environment. Three other members of the executive committee of the HC were also appointed to the Council, namely Eric Hall, Emil Adler and Richard Fuggle.<sup>53</sup>

The second factor relates to the functions of the HC. Though established as a co-ordinating ENGO, the HC's influence with the government grew considerably to the extent where its advice on environmental policy issues was sought on several occasions. The HC thus ended up performing the functions of a co-ordinating, liaison

<sup>52</sup> E.A. Zaloumis, "President's report: the Wildlife Society, 1983-1984" in *African Wildlife* 38(6), 1984, p. 230; E.A. Zaloumis, "President's report: the Wildlife Society, 1985-1986" in *African Wildlife* 40(6), 1986, p. 209.

<sup>53</sup> *Habitat Council Newsletter*, January 1983, pp. 1-2; JGPDC, Habitat Council: "Die Habitatraad en die Raad vir die Omgewing", memorandum from the secretary to the members of the executive committee of the HC, 29.3.1985, pp. 1-4.

(between the private sector and the government) and policymaking body, even though its original mandate included only co-ordinating and liaison powers. The establishment of the Council for the Environment ended the HC's participation in governmental policy formulation and dealt a severe blow to its liaison with governmental departments. The HC was not ignorant of the possibility that the Council could threaten their existence and redefined its role shortly after the latter began with its work in 1983. It identified its major function as being the watchdog of the ENGO-community. However, individual members assumed the role of watchdogs and the HC, at most, can be credited with performing a co-ordinating role between 1982 and 1988.<sup>54</sup>

While the influence of the HC sharply declined, that of mainstream ENGOs such as the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), the Botanical Society of South Africa, the Wildlife Society and the Southern African Nature Foundation (SANF) continued to grow in the period under discussion. The Wildlife Society reaffirmed its position as the biggest ENGO in South Africa and recorded an all-time high membership totalling over 23 000 by 1986. The Society by that time consisted of eight active branches, several affiliated societies in Southern Africa, 52 centres and 484 wildlife clubs for young people.<sup>55</sup> The SANF, on the other hand, had a corporate membership of 220 companies by 1989. Its list of achievements between 1968 and 1989 include the raising of over R30 million for conservation projects, the establishment of five national parks (e.g. the Pilanesberg National Park, 1979, and the West Coast National Park, 1985), more than 30 nature reserves, and the launching of 160 conservation projects in the Southern Africa region.<sup>56</sup>

Public interest in environmental affairs, as in the preceding period, manifested itself in the founding of new ENGOs such as the Society Against Nuclear Energy (SANE, 1983), the Cape Town Ecology Group (CTEG, 1984), the Rhino and Elephant

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<sup>54</sup> JGPDC, Habitat Council: "Die taak en opdrag van die Habitatraad gesien in die lig van sy verhouding tot die Raad vir die Omgewing", memorandum from the secretary to the members of the executive committee of the HC and the chairman of the Council for the Environment, 10.4.1983, pp. 1-3; JGPDC, Habitat Council: "Funksionering van Habitatraad", memorandum from the secretary to the members of the executive committee of the HC, 30.7.1985.

<sup>55</sup> Zaloumis, "President's report: the Wildlife Society, 1985-1986", p. 206.

<sup>56</sup> J. Deacon, "Stigting vir bewaring" in *Suid-Afrikaanse Panorama* 34(10), November/December 1989, pp. 15-19; C. Louw, "Nuwe man by Natuurstigting vee met wetenskaplike besem" in *Die Suid-Afrikaan* 19, February 1989, pp. 37-38.

Foundation (1986) and the Western Cape Marine Conservation Society (1988). The overwhelming majority of these groups either focused on single issues or confined their activities to specific geographical areas. Renewed interest in the conservation of the built-environment also led to the founding of ENGOS such as the Rhodes Parks Preservation Society (1983), the Franschhoek Trust (1984), the Parktown and Westcliff Heritage Trust (1986) and the Zastron Bewaringskomitee (1988).<sup>57</sup>

Conservation remained the major focus area of the non-governmental sector of the environmental movement with existing (see section 4.5) and newly established ENGOS participating in the conservation of flora, wildlife, endangered species, and the marine and built-environment, to name but a few. Special attention was paid to the plight of endangered species with the EWT, the SANF, the Wildlife Society and the Rhino and Elephant Foundation sponsoring and conducting research and conservation programmes to prevent the extinction of species like the African elephant, the white and black rhinoceros, the riverine rabbit, the samango monkey, the southern right whale, the blue swallow and the wattled crane.<sup>58</sup>

Attempts to conserve endangered species, especially the elephant and rhinoceros, proved to be very popular with white people in general; maybe too popular (e.g. the Rhino Pledge Day in 1989 raised more than R1,5 million) because the white "obsession" with saving endangered species further alienated black people from the natural environment. While white ENGOS and the government spent millions of rands to prevent the extinction of fauna and flora, millions of black people had no access to safe water, adequate land, electricity and primary health care. This state of affairs contributed to questions such as whether animals are more important than (black) people frequently being asked by anti-apartheid groups.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *The Green Pages 1991/1992: environmental networking and resource directory for Southern Africa*, pp. 28, 39, 94, 125-126, 130-131, 133. See also G. Binckes, "Environmental organisational structures and public participation in South Africa" in D. Japha and V. Japha (eds), *Proceedings of the national urban conservation symposium, Johannesburg, 1990*, pp. 108-114; F. Bird, "The conservation struggle at grassroots level" in Japha and Japha (eds), pp. 115-119.

<sup>58</sup> See for example C. Walker, "The Rhino and Elephant Foundation" in *African Panorama* 40(5), 1995, pp. 50-54; Zaloumis, "President's report: the Wildlife Society, 1985-1986", pp. 211-213; EWT, "Endangered Wildlife Trust", <<http://www.infoweb.co.za/enviro/about.htm>>, 17.4.1996; A. Burger, "Private sektor se aandeel" in *Suid-Afrikaanse Panorama* 37(2), March/April 1992, pp. 69-72; E. van Wijk, "'n Kwessie van oorlewing" in *Suid-Afrikaanse Panorama* 37(2), March/April 1992, pp. 98-103.

<sup>59</sup> E. Koch, D. Cooper and H. Coetzee, *Water, waste and wildlife: the politics of ecology in South Africa*, p. 2; Walker, pp. 50-54.

From a human science perspective, the single most important contribution to conservation in South Africa between 1982 and 1988 came from the Purros project founded by Garth Owen-Smith and Margaret Jacobsohn on behalf of the EWT. In Purros, a village in SWA, Owen-Smith and Jacobsohn succeeded in involving the whole community in wildlife conservation and set up mechanisms to ensure that the community benefited from the tourists that visit the area. In light of the successes of the Purros project, the EWT hosted an international symposium on national parks, nature reserves and their neighbours in 1988. This symposium provided the first forum ever at which the communities neighbouring protected areas could voice their opinions as to what they thought of these areas.<sup>60</sup>

The Purros project can be seen as a turning point in the management of protected areas in South Africa. It challenged the prevailing belief that people (especially black people) were the enemies of conservation and that they should be kept out of protected areas. It further challenged the then accepted practice that people should "make room" for protected areas, which normally meant the forced removal of communities living within the proposed borders (e.g. the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg National Park, 1979, and the Tembe-Thonga in the Tembe Elephant Park, 1983). The Project helped bring about a shift away from alienating communities from their traditional land and resources towards a conservation ethos that allowed for the direct participation of neighbouring communities in protected areas. This change in ethos made it possible for the Richtersveld Community Committee to successfully negotiate grazing rights and management participation in the proposed Richtersveld National Park with the National Parks Board between 1989 and 1990.<sup>61</sup>

Particular emphasis was also placed on the need for environmental education, both formal and informal, in an effort to create environmental awareness among the

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<sup>60</sup> Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, pp. 27-29. See also Endangered Wildlife Trust, *Proceedings of the international symposium on national parks, nature reserves and neighbours, Johannesburg, 31.10.1988-2.11.1988*.

<sup>61</sup> See for example D. Fig, "Flowers in the desert: community struggles in Namaqualand" in J. Cock and E. Koch (eds), *Going green: people, politics and the environment in South Africa*, pp. 118-121; Association for Rural Advancement, "Animals versus people: the Tembe Elephant Park" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 223-227; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, pp. 17-22, 27-30; E. Boonzaier, "People, parks and politics" in Ramphela and McDowell (eds), pp. 155-162.

general public. An important start was the organising of an environmental education conference in April 1982 at Treverton College in the Natal Midlands, which brought together all role-players for the first time. This conference led to the founding of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA). It was followed up in 1984 with a workshop, organised by the Council for the Environment, on a national policy on environmental education, which eventually resulted in the publication of the White Paper on Environmental Education in 1989. The main objectives of the environmental education drive of the 1980s were the adoption of an official environmental education policy by the government, the inclusion of environmental education in school curricula and the development of resource material for both the formal and informal education sectors. The driving force behind the initiatives was ENGOS such as the Wildlife Society, the SANF, the Wilderness Leadership School and the EEASA which co-operated closely on this matter with the Department of Environment Affairs and the Council for the Environment.<sup>62</sup>

A new focus area that emerged from 1980 onwards was the widespread use of agrochemicals<sup>63</sup> by the government and the farming community. Agrochemicals became an issue after the Natal Fresh Produce Growers' Association (NFPGA) filed a lawsuit against seventeen South African chemical companies in 1985. The NFPGA claimed that the hormone herbicides used on neighbouring sugar cane and timber plantations in the Tala Valley (close to Pietermaritzburg in Natal) damaged its members' crops. Rain samples taken in the vegetable fields in the Valley in 1987 revealed extremely high concentrations of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. The concentration of 2,4,5-T, for example, was 10 000 times higher than what the Environmental Protection Agency in the USA considers safe. The NFPGA lost its case on a technicality in 1990 when the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court ruled that it should

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<sup>62</sup> P. Irwin, "15 years on and time for a reflective pause?" in *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education* 17, 1997, pp. 1-2; Council for the Environment, *Working documents for a national policy on environmental education, Midmar Dam, 28.2.1984-2.3.1984*, pp. 1-143; Departement van Omgewingsake, *Witskrif oor omgewingsopvoeding* (W.P.F.-1989), pp. 5-8; H. Viljoen, "White Paper: symbol of concern" in *Conserva* 5(2), March 1990, pp. 6-7; J. Taylor, "The White Paper on environmental education and the Wildlife Society's role" in *African Wildlife* 43(4), 1989, pp. 206-211. See also J. Taylor, *Share-Net: a case study of environmental education resource material development in a risk society*, p. 15 et seq. for a discussion of the environmental education initiatives of the Wildlife Society.

<sup>63</sup> Agrochemicals refers to a variety of chemicals including pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and growth regulants that are used in agriculture. "The 'aggro' chemicals" in *Critical Health* 33, November 1990, p. 76.



have brought the lawsuit against the users of hormone herbicides (the sugar and timber plantation owners) and not the manufacturers.<sup>64</sup>

Other focus areas of ENGOS in South Africa between 1982 and 1988 included pollution, nuclear energy and the creation of open spaces in urban areas. Anti-pollution activities concentrated mainly, but not exclusively, on litter and campaigns to get South Africans to clean up their environment. In co-operation with the Department of Environment Affairs, Keep South Africa Tidy launched a country-wide campaign in 1983 to promote awareness of the problems associated with litter in the Republic.<sup>65</sup> The Dolphin Action and Protection Group, on the other hand, addressed the problem of plastic pollution at sea and along the coastline by launching the Prevent Plastic Pollution Campaign in 1987.<sup>66</sup>

Only two ENGOS, namely Koeberg Alert and the Society Against Nuclear Energy, were active in anti-nuclear campaigns. Their impact, however, was extremely limited and they failed to establish a broad support base.<sup>67</sup> The extent to which nuclear energy was a non-issue with the general public was particularly emphasised in 1986 with the Chernobyl disaster. The meltdown of reactor no 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power station on 25-26 April 1986 generated renewed interest in and support for ENGOS and green political parties in Europe (see section 2.5). However, in South Africa, the reassurances of Escom that this type of nuclear disaster could never happen at Koeberg satisfied the general public. Chernobyl therefore did not generate substantial support for the anti-nuclear groups in South Africa.<sup>68</sup> A more popular issue with the public was the Metropolitan Open Spaces System (MOSS) which was launched by the Natal branch of the Wildlife Society in 1983. Moss' main objective was the identification of natural areas in the urban environment that could be conserved and which could serve educational and recreational purposes. Once identified, the Wildlife

<sup>64</sup> M. Laing, "Jekyll-and-Hyde herbicides" in *Rotating the cube: environmental strategies for the 1990s*, pp. 41-43; D. Cooper, "From soil erosion to sustainability: land use in South Africa" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 184-186; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, pp. 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> RP 28/1985, p. 198.

<sup>66</sup> Dolphin Action and Protection Group, *Save our sealife: prevent plastic pollution* (pamphlet), p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> M. Gandar, "The imbalance of power" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 110-111.

<sup>68</sup> See for example A. van Heerden, "Could a 'Chernobyl' nuclear disaster happen here?" in *African Wildlife* 40(3), 1986, pp. 92-97; *The Weekly Mail*, 9-15.5.1986, pp. 12-13; D. Fig, "Nuclear energy in South Africa" in *South African Outlook* 121(2), February/March 1991, pp. 34-37.

Society set out to raise money for the formal establishment and conservation of such areas.<sup>69</sup>

### 5.5.2 Community-based ENGOs in black and coloured communities

The level of development of a country normally determines the type of environmental issues likely to be addressed. Major issues for ENGOs in developed countries thus tend to concentrate on the side effects of development such as pollution, acid rain and nuclear energy, while particular emphasis is also placed on fauna and flora conservation. On the other hand, ENGOs in developing countries focus more on environmental problems that exist due to a lack of development, such as poverty, the lack of basic services and of primary health care, and soil erosion.

South Africa is generally considered to be both a developing and a developed country in one, the result being that the developed/developing world dichotomy in environmental issues manifests itself within the same country.<sup>70</sup> Apart from addressing soil conservation (largely done by the NVT), ENGOs in general did not address the environmental problems of black and coloured communities in South Africa. Involvement in the latter was mostly confined to running environmental education programmes like the African Conservation Education programme started by the Natal branch of the Wildlife Society in 1975.<sup>71</sup>

That black people had different environmental needs from those of white people was acknowledged before 1982 with the establishment of the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC) in Soweto in 1978. From the start the NEAC set out, *inter alia*, to promote environmental awareness, launched a campaign to combat the lack of waste removal services in Soweto (Operation Clean Up) and set up a

<sup>69</sup> Zaloumis, "President's report: the Wildlife Society, 1983-1984", p. 224; C. Cooper, "People, the environment, and change" in *South African Institute of Race Relations Spotlight* 5/94, October 1994, p. 47; E. Botha, "The man who put urban conservation on the map" in *African Wildlife* 41(6), 1987, pp. 319-325.

<sup>70</sup> J. Cock and E. Koch, "Preface" in Cock and Koch (eds), unnumbered two pages following the Contents.

<sup>71</sup> See J.A. Pringle, *The conservationists and the killers: the story of game protection and the Wildlife Society*, pp. 256-270 for a discussion of the African Conservation Education programme.

recreational centre in Dobsonville Park to cater for the needs of the youth.<sup>72</sup> The founder and president of NEAC, Japhta Lekgheto, repeatedly emphasised the link between apartheid and the dismal conditions in townships, stating that "blacks have always had to live in an environment that was neither beautiful nor clean. We have not had proper housing, roads or services because the authorities would not accept that we were a permanent part of the city scene".<sup>73</sup>

The greening of some black and coloured communities began in earnest in 1982 with the founding of Abalimi Bezekhaya ("Planters of the Home") by a Catholic welfare and developmental organisation. Initially Abalimi Bezekhaya focused on attempts to stimulate and promote an organic food garden culture among black communities in the greater Cape Town area in order to help people produce their own food. During the course of the 1980s it broadened its agenda to include tree planting, general greening of townships and environmental education. Two garden centres were set up in Nyanga (1985) and Khayelitsha (1989) to provide a low cost service to township residents.<sup>74</sup>

Similar projects were launched by the Africa Tree Centre (1984 - Edendale), Natsoc (1984 - the Cape Flats), Ecolink (1985 - Gazankulu, KaNgwane and Lebowa) and Khanyisa (1988 - Langa, Guguletu and Khayelitsha). The Mboza Village Project in northern KwaZulu, on the other hand, was established to help develop the community and to create job opportunities. It started out as a sewing project for women in the area and as a literacy centre, but developed further to incorporate issues such as the provision of safe water and primary health care. Lebowa's first conservation club ever, the Nature Conservation Club, was established in 1986 in Maandagshoek.<sup>75</sup> The immediate environment also received attention during the political instability that

<sup>72</sup> L. Lawson, "The ghetto and the greenbelt: the environmental crisis in urban areas" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 64-65; Cooper, pp. 56-58; *The Star*, 6.6.1988, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> J. Lekgheto as quoted by J. Cock, "Ozone-friendly politics" in *Work in Progress* 66, May 1990, p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> Cooper, pp. 12-13; "Abalimi Bezekhaya: the people's garden centre" in *South African Outlook* 122(1451), June 1992, pp. 81-83.

<sup>75</sup> See Cooper, pp. 25-26, 38-40, 52-54, 58-59; Khan, pp. 106-108, 110-112, 121-122; L. van Niekerk, "A woman of substance" in *Conserva* 7(3), May/June 1992, pp. 12-13.

lasted from 1984 onwards, through organised garbage collections and the establishment of "people's parks" in many townships around the country.<sup>76</sup>

A movement similar to the Environmental Justice Movement in the USA (see section 2.6) began to emerge among black people in South Africa between 1982 and 1988. Occupational health and safety hazards first made headlines in August 1983 with the explosion at the Hlobane Colliery that killed 68 mineworkers.<sup>77</sup> In the following year, the poor state of the environment in the Mafefe district, Lebowa (80 km east of Pietersburg), ensured publicity not only for the occupational health risks involved in asbestos mining, but also for the health risks involved in living within close proximity of mining activities.<sup>78</sup>

Asbestos (both crocidolite and amosite) were mined in Mafefe from the 1910s up until 1975 when a drop in world demand for asbestos products forced the industry to close a number of mines in South Africa.<sup>79</sup> The only problem was that the mine company did not clean up behind it and left nineteen asbestos tailings dumps behinds which continued to pollute the environment in the district. The outcry that was caused by events in the Mafefe district should be viewed against the background of the international "campaign against asbestos" of the 1970s and early 1980s. The campaign succeeded in creating the perception among the public world-wide that asbestos and its products were extremely harmful to human health. This perception was in particular fuelled by medical research in the late seventies into the health hazards of exposure to asbestos, which concluded that mortality from lung-diseases like asbestosis and mesothelioma could be directly linked to asbestos exposure.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Cock, "Ozone-friendly politics", p. 29; J. Cock, "The politics of ecology" in Ramphela and McDowell (eds), pp. 18-19.

<sup>77</sup> J. Leger, "From Hlobane to Kinross: disasters and the struggle for health and safety on the mines" in Moss and Obery (eds), pp. 292-293.

<sup>78</sup> M. Felix, "Risking their lives in ignorance: the story of an asbestos-polluted community" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 35-37, 41.

<sup>79</sup> Up to 90% of the asbestos mined in South Africa was exported because of a limited local demand. Asbestos exports ranked seventh among the country's non-gold exports in 1985. H.P. Hart, "Asbestos in South Africa" in *Journal of the South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy* 88(6), June 1988, p. 189; G. van Heerden, "Asbestos pollution well under control" in *RSA Policy Review* 6(4), May 1993, p. 41.

<sup>80</sup> P.H.R. Snyman, "Safety and health in the Northern Cape blue asbestos belt" in *Historia* 33(1), May 1988, pp. 31-33.

In South Africa, government control over the industry was limited. The magisterial districts of Barberton, Carolina, Hay, Kuruman, Pietersburg, Postmasburg, Prieska and Vryburg were declared dust control areas only in 1985,<sup>81</sup> despite the fact that commercial mining in these areas started between 1906 and 1930. The districts of Thabamooopo, Sekhukhuneland and Mafefe fell under the authority of the Lebowa government, and the South African government, at most, could only recommend the declaring of dust control areas in those communities. Mafefe was only afforded this status in 1989. Inequalities also existed in the compensation of workers who contracted first and second-degree asbestosis and mesothelioma due to occupational exposure to asbestos fibres.<sup>82</sup>

In 1987 the National Centre for Occupational Health (NCOH) launched a project in Mafefe to study the health implications of asbestos fibres in the environment. A medical survey conducted by the NCOH in 1988 found that 40% of the total respondents had pleural changes. The NCOH not only recommended that the mine dumps be reclaimed (the government commissioned the Research Institute for Reclaiming Ecology at the University of Potchefstroom in 1989), but also that the whole community be relocated to a safer environment. The latter recommendation was based on the fact that asbestos fibres can pollute an area for well over twenty years after commercial mining activities had ceased. The NCOH worked closely with the Mafefe Asbestos Health Workers Committee, which was formed by the community to carry out health education work in Mafefe.<sup>83</sup>

The importance of Mafefe for the environmental movement in South Africa was twofold: firstly, it highlighted the environmental risks many people of colour had to face on a daily basis in their immediate living environment and at work. Secondly, it

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<sup>81</sup> In terms of the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act of 1956, the Minister of Health must first declare an area a dust control area before dust control measures are applicable. With asbestos mining, airborne asbestos fibres pose the greatest environmental risk. Felix, pp. 40-41.

<sup>82</sup> The Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act (no 78 of 1973) compensated workers according to race. A white worker with mesothelioma, for example, was compensated with R33 207, while a black worker got only R2 052 for the same illness. Snyman, p. 49. See also E. Stander and J.J. la Grange, *Investigation reports on the processing of certain minerals in the Republic of South Africa and in South West Africa 3: Asbestos*, pp. 1-5.

<sup>83</sup> Felix, pp. 37-42.

prompted the government to start imposing strict legislation that in turn forced the asbestos industry in South Africa to clean up its operation.<sup>84</sup>

### 5.5.3 Environmental research by the academic community

The academic community in South Africa made valuable contributions to the environmental movement in that their research led to a better understanding of not only the environment in general, but also of the true state of the South African environment. This research led to the publication of a great number of scientific reports including a series of *South African Red Data Books* (e.g. on birds, 1984, and on plants - the fynbos and karoo biomes, 1985), annual pollution surveys, reports on the marine environment and recycling practices.<sup>85</sup>

The single most important research report published between 1982 and 1988 dealt with atmospheric pollution and its implications in the Eastern Transvaal Highveld (ETH). Twenty coal-fired power stations, fifteen owned by Escom and five by municipalities in the ETH, generated about 80% of South Africa's total electrical power.<sup>86</sup> In the report, the authors concluded that sulphur dioxide emissions in the ETH were comparable with those of the largest industrial areas of the world. The power stations alone emitted an average of 31,25 tonnes SO<sub>2</sub>/km<sup>2</sup>. This was even higher than the 30 tonnes SO<sub>2</sub>/km<sup>2</sup> of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), which was infamous for its abnormally high levels of air pollution. The report further stated that there were sufficient grounds for concern regarding the negative impact of air pollution on the ETH environment, which included human health risks, and the effect of acid rain (a side effect of high SO<sub>2</sub> emissions) on the forests and crops in the area.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> See Van Heerden, pp. 42-47 for a discussion of governmental actions in this regard.

<sup>85</sup> See for example R.S. Judais, *White South Africans' knowledge about, attitude towards, and practice in recycling of domestic waste* (Human Sciences Research Council report S-137). See also A.G.S. Moldan and J.H. Ridder (eds), *Marine pollution: a 1988 perspective* (South African National Scientific Programmes report 161), pp. 76-81 for a list of some of the research reports published between 1980 and 1989.

<sup>86</sup> Coal provides 82% of South Africa's total energy. C. Cooper, "South Africa's environment: the basic facts" in *South African Institute of Race Relations Fast Facts* 9/92, September 1992, pp. 2-3.

<sup>87</sup> P.D. Tyson, F.J. Kruger and C.W. Louw, *Atmospheric pollution and its implications in the Eastern Transvaal Highveld* (South African National Scientific Programmes report 150), pp. 44, 96-98. *The Star* published a second report on air pollution in the ETH, commissioned by the manufacturers of clean air equipment, in 1988. According to this report, the SO<sub>2</sub> emissions were not 31,25 tonnes, but

The importance of the ETH pollution report lies in the fact that it established once and for all that South Africa indeed had an air pollution problem. The official position of the government from the mid-1960s until 1988 was that air pollution levels in the country were well below the average of developed countries. Consequently they maintained that there was no reason for concern. The publication of the ETH pollution report in 1988 forced the government to change this perspective and further prompted it to start enforcing air pollution legislation (which the country adopted back in 1965) properly. Though the report only focused on the ETH, the results thereof led directly to questions being asked as to what the air pollution levels of places like Soweto and Sasolburg were, and how this impacted on human health.<sup>88</sup>

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The period 1982 to 1988 represents a transitional phase in the history of South African environmentalism in which the movement gradually started to move away from its dominant conservation agenda to address a broader range of environmental issues such as the use of agrochemicals, occupational health and safety hazards, and air pollution in the ETH. The main achievements of the environmental movement in this period, however, remained in the conservation field. Of particular importance was the Purros project of the EWT which led directly to a shift in the dominant conservation ethos away from alienating communities from their traditional land and resources, towards a perspective that allowed for the direct participation of neighbouring communities in protected areas.

Despite important contributions made by South African ENGOs and the academic community, the government remained the dominant role-player within the South African environmental movement. The government managed to maintain its position of dominance mainly because of the pioneering work done by the Council for the Environment, which should be credited for most of the government's initiatives in the environmental field between 1982 and 1988. The importance of the Council for the

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57,5 tonnes SO<sub>2</sub>/km<sup>2</sup> in the ETH. J. Clarke, *Back to earth: South Africa's environmental challenges*, p. 28.

<sup>88</sup> Clarke, pp. 19-42.

Environment, however, was short-lived. The Council, together with other governmental institutions, was perceived as being part of governmental structures that new environmentalist ENGOs such as Earthlife Africa and Consumers Against Pollution sought to transform in the phase in the history of South African environmentalism which lasted from 1988 to 1992.



## CHAPTER 6

### ENVIRONMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1988-1992

The founding of Earthlife Africa in 1988 marked the beginning of radical changes within the South African environmental movement that would henceforth redirect the movement away from the conservation of natural resources towards meeting the goal of sustainable development. At long last, the environment became a political issue and a new frontier on which the struggle to end apartheid had to be fought. Of central concern was not so much the natural environment, but rather community empowerment, the role of women, the redistribution of resources, living conditions in townships and occupational health and safety.

At its core, the struggle for the environment became a struggle against the South African government and the fundamental transformation of institutions and values were viewed as a prerequisite for a healthier environment in the country. The unwillingness of the government to address environmental issues as political issues in turn resulted in it being ousted from its position of dominance within the environmental movement. For most of the period it occupied a secondary position with the environmental agenda being set by non-governmental role-players outside formal governmental structures. The newly emerged environmentalists also threatened the status of existing environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) by questioning the environmental agendas of the latter, which were often categorised as being part of an "authoritarian conservation perspective".<sup>1</sup> This criticism prompted many ENGOS to adopt a broader environmental agenda that came to include concern for the environmental needs of people of colour as well.

#### 6.1 Political background: South Africa, 1988-1992

The changes within the environmental movement between 1988 and 1992 were inextricably bound to the political changes that occurred in South Africa in the same

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<sup>1</sup> J. Cock, "Going green at the grassroots: the environment as a political issue" in J. Cock and E. Koch (eds), *Going green: people, politics and the environment in South Africa*, p. 1.

period. It is therefore important to start off by briefly exploring the political setting within which the environmental movement operated in the period under discussion.

South Africa entered 1988 as a member of the so-called "Pariah-club", the outcasts of the international political community. As a political outcast South Africa was denied full-participation in the United Nations (UN), it was excluded from the majority of the UN agencies and denied mutual diplomatic relations with most independent states.<sup>2</sup> Of more concern to the government was the detrimental impact of economic sanctions on the national economy, with the Minister of Finance, Barend du Plessis, stating in the House of Assembly in March 1989, that the question was no longer whether South Africa would experience economic growth, but whether the Republic would be able to survive economically.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after, in May 1989, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Dr Gerhard de Kock, warned that South Africa would remain a capital exporting and debt-repaying country for years to come if adequate progress was not made with the political and constitutional reforms taking place.<sup>4</sup> In the Southern Africa region, South Africa's administration of and control over South West Africa came to an end when that territory became independent as Namibia on 21 March 1990. The independence of Namibia brought an end to 75 years of direct South African involvement in the country and the former adversary of South Africa, Sam Nujoma, became the first president of the Swapo-led government.<sup>5</sup>

Domestically the South African government continued with the repression of all anti-governmental organisations and banned an unprecedented 32 organisations in 1988. Included in the list were the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo), the National Education Crisis Committee and a right-wing organisation, the Blanke Bevrydingsbeweging. The 32 organisations were banned under State of Emergency regulations which meant that the organisations could only be unbanned with the lifting of the State of Emergency and that the bannings could

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<sup>2</sup> D.P. Wessels, "Die hervormingsinisiatief en transformasieproses in Suid-Afrika" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 17(1), June 1992, pp. 195-196.

<sup>3</sup> *Debates of Parliament*, 15.3.1989, col. 2843.

<sup>4</sup> N. Worden, *The making of modern South African: conquest, segregation and apartheid* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, pp. 538-540. See Department of Foreign Affairs, *Namibian independence and Cuban troop withdrawal* for more details of the negotiation process that led to South Africa granting independence to Namibia.

not be challenged in court as was the case with banning under the Internal Security Act.<sup>6</sup>

In the following year the struggle to end apartheid received a boost when twenty State of Emergency detainees at Diepkloof prison began an indefinite hunger strike on 23 January 1989. By the end of March 1989, 700 detainees held were participating in the hunger strike. Because of the deteriorating health of the strikers and world interest in the event, the government had to give in to some of the strikers' demands and the majority of them were released. The hunger strike was followed by the defiance campaign organised by the Mass Democratic Movement in August 1989. It had two objectives, namely to challenge the segregation of amenities and services (e.g. in hospitals and schools), and to highlight governmental restrictions on organisations and individuals.<sup>7</sup>

An important event within white politics was F.W. de Klerk's rise to power when he became acting State President following P.W. Botha's resignation on 15 August 1989. After the National Party's (NP) victory in the general election of 6 September 1989, the parliamentary electoral college appointed De Klerk as State President on 14 September 1989.<sup>8</sup> While it was P.W. Botha that initiated the first tentative steps towards a political dispensation that would eventually allow for majority rule in South Africa, it was De Klerk who truly crossed the Rubicon by placing the country on an irreversible path towards true democracy.<sup>9</sup>

De Klerk crossed the Rubicon on 2 February 1990 when he announced at the opening of parliament that the ban on the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) would be lifted. He also informed parliament that political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, would be released, that the ban on 33 organisations restricted under the State of

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Committee, "Banning and restriction of organisations" in M. Coleman (ed.), *A crime against humanity: analysing the repression of the apartheid state*, pp. 87-90.

<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Committee, "The great hunger strike" in Coleman (ed.), pp. 140-141; Human Rights Committee, "The 1989 defiance campaign" in Coleman (ed.), pp. 141-145; Worden, p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> A. Kamsteeg and E. van Dijk, *F.W. de Klerk: man of the moment*, pp. 46-56.

<sup>9</sup> A. Sparks, *The mind of South Africa: the story of the rise and fall of apartheid*, pp. 398-399. See also A.H. Marais, "Negotiations for a democratic South Africa, 1985-1992" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 19(2), September 1994, pp. 1-4 for a discussion of the initiatives of Botha.

Emergency regulations would be lifted and that most of the media restrictions would be done away with.<sup>10</sup> Nelson Mandela was freed on 11 February 1990, while key apartheid legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act were repealed in 1991.<sup>11</sup>

In the months that followed, the NP slowly established a working relationship with the ANC and other interested parties in order to negotiate a democratic future for South Africa. After months of preparatory work, the formal negotiation process started with the first Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) that was held on 20 and 21 December 1991. Codesa 1 was followed by Codesa 2 in May 1992 which ended in deadlock and the suspension by the ANC of talks with the government. Talks were resumed again after the two parties signed a Record of Understanding on 26 September 1992.<sup>12</sup>

A major obstacle in the negotiation process was the endemic violence in the country, especially in the black communities on the East Rand and in KwaZulu/Natal. The basic reason for this violence was a power struggle between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the ANC, as to who would dominate the negotiation process with the government. The government did not remain impartial during the violence and supported the IFP in a number of ways that included funding and police support. In 1990 alone, 3 699 people died in politically motivated violence, with August 1990 having the highest death toll of 698. More than 2 600 and 3 500 people died in political violence in 1991 and 1992 respectively.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the ongoing political violence and constant deadlocks in the negotiation process, South Africa's standing within the international political community improved considerably after 1990. The government's commitment to transformation was "rewarded" with the lifting of some economic sanctions (despite an ANC appeal

<sup>10</sup> *Debates of Parliament*, 2.2.1990, col. 12-18.

<sup>11</sup> Kamsteeg and Van Dijk, p. 62; Worden, p. 137.

<sup>12</sup> Marais, pp. 5-16; J.A. du Pisani, "Negotiating a democratic South Africa: bilateral and multiparty negotiations, June 1992 to December 1993" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 19(2), September 1994, pp. 28-40.

<sup>13</sup> See for example A. Duvenhage, "Rewolusionêre of ewolusionêre verandering in 'n diepverdeelde samelewing: 'n perspektief vanuit Algerië vir Suid-Afrika" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 17(1), June 1992, pp. 170-174; Human Rights Committee, "Checkmate for apartheid?" in Coleman (ed.), pp. 177-206; Human Rights Committee, "Three years of destabilisation" in Coleman (ed.), pp. 208-222.

not to do so) and sports boycotts (e.g. the country was allowed back into the Olympic Movement and consequently participated in the Barcelona Games in 1992).<sup>14</sup> World satisfaction with the transformational processes that was taking place in South Africa was further emphasised when F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela were jointly awarded the Nobel peace prize in December 1993.<sup>15</sup> After four years of talks, negotiations and peace settlements, South Africa finally went to the polls in April 1994 to elect a majority government to represent all South Africans. Victory belonged to the ANC and Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the new President of South Africa on 10 May 1994.<sup>16</sup>

## 6.2 Environmental non-governmental organisations in South Africa

In October 1989 *The Weekly Mail* published a brief who's who guide of the main ENGOs active in South Africa. The article identified ten ENGOs as being the major role-players, namely the Wildlife Society, Earthlife Africa (ELA), the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), the Rhino and Elephant Foundation, the Environment and Development Agency (EDA), the Zululand Environment Alliance (ZEAL), Koeberg Alert, the Society Against Nuclear Energy (SANE), the Air Pollution Appeal Committee (APAC) and the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC).<sup>17</sup>

This who's who guide reflected the radical changes that occurred in the non-governmental sector of the environmental movement from 1988 onwards. Included in the list were six non-conservation ENGOs that pointed towards the shift away from what sociologist and environmentalist Jacklyn Cock termed the dominant "authoritarian conservation perspective". According to Cock this perspective focused exclusively on the preservation of wilderness areas and particular plant and animal species. Overpopulation was often portrayed as the main environmental problem, while people were perceived to be responsible for destroying trees and creating waste.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Worden, pp. 138-139.

<sup>15</sup> J.C. de Wet, "Building community in South Africa: Mandela and De Klerk on receiving the Nobel peace prize" in *Journal for Contemporary History* 19(3), December 1994, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> See A. Reynolds (ed.), *Election '94, South Africa: the campaigns, results and future prospects* for an analysis of the 1994 general election.

<sup>17</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 6-12.10.1989, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Cock, "Going green", p. 1.

Cock is correct in her identification of conservation as the dominant perspective of the environmental movement in South Africa (until 1988). However, her identification of the main aspects of the perspective is problematic. She fails to acknowledge that conservation in the country went beyond the mere preservation of wilderness areas and particular fauna and flora species to include, *inter alia*, environmental education and resource conservation as well (see sections 4.5.1 and 5.5.1). Overpopulation, on the other hand, was a major environmental problem abroad, but in South Africa the majority of ENGOs and the government did not identify it as such. After the report of the President's Council on demographic trends in the country, overpopulation and high population growth became economical and political problems and were addressed as such (see section 5.3).

From 1988 onwards, the "authoritarian" conservation perspective was gradually replaced with a perspective that viewed environmental issues as political issues directly linked to the liberation struggle of the anti-apartheid groups. This "new" environmentalism emphasised, *inter alia*, the need for development in the fight against poverty, access to (political) power and resources for all racial groups, people's right to a healthy environment (both living and working) and the important role women play in society. The new environmentalism further acknowledged that local communities should be consulted over environmental issues that affected them, and that ENGOs should work with these communities in devising strategies and tactics for environmental campaigns. With few exceptions, the new environmentalism was anthropocentric in nature in that it addressed the environmental needs of humans, in particular those of black people.<sup>19</sup>

### **6.2.1 Earthlife Africa and the emergence of new environmentalism in South Africa**

The founding of Earthlife Africa (ELA) in August 1988 marked the beginning of new environmentalism in South Africa. Though like-minded ENGOs such as Koeberg

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*; J.J. Müller, "A greener South Africa? Environmentalism, politics and the future" in *Politikon* 24(1), June 1997, pp. 114-115; E. Koch, "Rainbow alliances: community struggles around ecological problems" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 31-32.

Alert, SANE and the Cape Town Ecology Group (CTEG) had existed for some time by 1988, their inability to take up environmental issues people cared about at the time and to convince the public to care for their (the ENGOs') agendas, meant that their work went by largely unnoticed. Whether the same fate would have befallen ELA had it been established prior to 1988, is an open question. What is known though, is that ELA provided many white anti-apartheid activists with a new "home" and a new front on which they could proceed with their struggle to end apartheid after the government banned 31 anti-apartheid organisations in 1988.<sup>20</sup>

ELA was established in August 1988 by a diverse group of students from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) as a mechanism to express and act on their environmental concerns. Their theoretical influence came from the German Green Party, Die Grünen, and from the outset the founding members opted to include politics into their environmental agenda. According to two of the founding members, Greg Jacobs and Peter Lukey, ELA not only provided anti-apartheid activists with a new home, but it also gave them the opportunity to address new issues associated with apartheid. This political activism coupled with a real concern for the state of the South African environment, both natural and human, set ELA apart from all the existing ENGOs in the country.<sup>21</sup>

That there was a need for an ENGO like ELA was evident from the phenomenal growth it experienced in the first couple of years of its existence. In 1989, branches were set up at the universities of the Witwatersrand, Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus), Pretoria, Cape Town and Stellenbosch.<sup>22</sup> By early 1990 ELA already had nine active branches across the country. Though it based its organisational structure on that of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, which meant that the branches existed independently, all branches were expected to uphold and promote the following six principles: reverence for the earth, grassroots democracy, the rejection of

<sup>20</sup> Interview: G. Jacobs and P. Lukey, Johannesburg, 5.3.1998.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; Earthlife Africa, "A completely biased, subjective and unofficial history of Earthlife Africa", <<http://www.earthlife.org.za/about/about.htm>>, 1997.

<sup>22</sup> In what proved to be one of its last actions, the Society for the Protection of the Environment (SPE) donated R100 to the newly established ELA branch at Stellenbosch University. The SPE dissolved late in 1989 after being dormant for nearly ten years. *Die Burger*, 3.5.1989, p. 10.

discrimination, non-violence, ending exploitation and the freeing of human potential.<sup>23</sup>

The single most important reason why ELA was established was that the founding members felt that the existing ENGOs were not addressing the "real issues". For them the real issues included toxic waste disposal, industrial pollution, animal cruelty and vivisection, nuclear energy, the use of agrochemicals and the environmental toll of apartheid. ELA identified the cause of these and other environmental problems as being the dominant socio-political and economic structure in South Africa, and actively campaigned for and participated in processes to transform the South African society.<sup>24</sup>

Not everybody perceived ELA as a necessary change within the environmental movement. The Wildlife Society in particular had a conflicting relationship with ELA to the extent that it formally objected to the granting of a fund-raising number to ELA, the grounds for objection being that ELA was not an environmental organisation, but a political party. ELA, on the other hand, was not interested in co-operating with the Wildlife Society because the latter was perceived to be part of the structures that ELA was protesting against. In the initial years, ELA preferred to co-operate with smaller ENGOs such as the Pesticides Action Network, Consumers Against Pollution and the APAC, and with trade unions, especially on issues relating to toxic waste.<sup>25</sup>

Its relationship with the government was even more conflicting and a mutual dislike existed between the two parties. ELA perceived the government and the Department of Environment Affairs as being blatant apologists for industry and the main cause of environmental degradation in the country. The government, on the other hand, did not quite know what to make of ELA in the initial years of its existence. Being a great believer in the assumption that the environment was not a political issue, the government found itself constantly in conflict with ELA activities and campaigns.

<sup>23</sup> *The Argus*, 15.5.1989, p. 9; Earthlife Africa, "A completely biased..."; W.G. Knill, *Green: the business report*, pp. 241-242; C. Albertyn, "Greening South Africa" in *Wood Southern Africa* 15(7), May 1990, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Albertyn, "Greening South Africa", p. 42; Interview: G. Jacobs and P. Lukey, Johannesburg, 5.3.1998; H. Vollgraaff, *Die aard en omvang van omgewings- en groenpolitiek in Suid-Afrika, met spesiale verwysing na die rol van belangegroep in die Wes-Kaap* (M.A. thesis), p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> Interview: G. Jacobs and P. Lukey, Johannesburg, 5.3.1998.



The government's inability to respond positively to this new environmentalism that ELA brought to the fore, directly contributed to its (the government) losing the initiative within the environmental movement as a whole. The open antagonism it showed towards ELA and like-minded groups in turn only made these ENGOs more determined to oppose the government in any way they could.<sup>26</sup>

The founding of ELA and its work thereafter was important for the following reasons: firstly, it introduced a highly politicised environmental agenda to South Africa; secondly, its activities and campaigns in which it directly opposed the government showed that co-operation was not necessarily the only path to follow (the preferred method prior to 1988) to bring about changes in the management of the South African environment; thirdly, ELA gave new meaning to existing ENGOs such as NEAC, SANE, CTEG and Koeberg Alert and in some cases provided an organisational structure within which the work of some ENGOs, especially SANE and Koeberg Alert, became relevant to a wider audience for the first time; fourthly, it set up an active environmental network in South Africa which was neither a single issue group nor confined to a specific area, and which pursued a broad environmental agenda. ELA was the closest South African ENGOs ever came to establishing a group comparable to Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.

### 6.2.2 The work of the other ENGOs

ELA's founding in 1988 was followed by a phenomenal growth in public interest in environmental issues, which resulted in the establishment of at least 55 new ENGOs between 1988 and 1992.<sup>27</sup> Compared to the eighteen ENGOs founded in the so-called "environmental revolution" period (1965-1972; see section 3.4), and the 49 founded between 1972 and 1982 (see section 4.5), the period 1988 to 1992 was the phase in which public interest in environmental issues was at an all-time high.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*; Interview: G.J. Kotzé, Riebeek Kasteel, 27.3.1998.

<sup>27</sup> No complete list of the ENGOs could be traced. The 55 new ENGOs were identified in the following sources: *The Weekly Mail*, 6-12.10.1989, p. 10; Müller, p. 117; Vollgraaff, pp. 108-115; Koch, "Rainbow alliances...", p. 27; J. Ledger, "Biodiversity: the basis of life. South Africa's endangered species" in Cock and Koch (eds), p. 243; E. Koch, D. Cooper and H. Coetzee, *Water, waste and wildlife: the politics of ecology in South Africa*, p. 1; C. Cooper, "People, the environment, and change" in *South African Institute of Race Relations Spotlight* 5/94, October 1994, pp. 9, 20, 23, 26, 33, 35, 40, 49, 54, 60, 62; *The Green Pages 1991/1992: environmental networking and resource directory for Southern Africa*, p. 6 *et seq.*

In no way can ELA be credited for this state of affairs. It was rather a combination of three factors that led to this renewed interest: the first factor was the political situation in the country, especially between 1989 and 1992, that created an environment in which people could more freely criticise the government. The second factor was the widespread environmental degradation in South Africa and the perceived unwillingness of the government to act positively in this regard. The third factor relates to the environmental agendas of the existing ENGOs. The dominant position of conservation on their agendas alienated many newcomers to the environmental scene. People who lived in severely polluted areas, for example, did not want to know that the black rhinoceros had been saved from becoming extinct. More important to them was when and how their grievances would be addressed, and this normally led to the establishment of an ENGO to cater for their specific environmental needs.

The newly established ENGOs focused on a wide range of environmental issues of which conservation was but one. Pollution was addressed by groups such as the APAC (1983), the Lowveld Environment Action Foundation (1989) and Consumers Against Pollution (1989).<sup>28</sup> The widespread use of agrochemicals by both the government and the farming community became an issue for ENGOs like the Natal Environment Network (1988) and the Biotox Foundation (1989).<sup>29</sup>

Proposed developments in ecologically sensitive areas prompted ENGOs such as the Zululand Environment Alliance (1989), the St Lucia Action Group (1989) and the Save Chapman's Peak Action Group (1989) to organise themselves in order to oppose these developments. Student interest in environmental issues led to the founding of numerous campus-based environmental organisations like the Living Environment Action Front (1990, University of Natal, Durban campus) and the Society to Protest Against the Destruction of the Environment (1990/91, University of Durban-Westville).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 6-12.10.1989, p. 10; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, p. 1; *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, p. 94. See also *Consumers Against Pollution Newsletter* 3(2), October 1991, pp. 1-12.

<sup>29</sup> *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, pp. 93, 100. See also M. Stanford, "Poison for the people" in *New Ground* 7, Autumn 1992, pp. 23-25; Earthlife Africa (Natal region), *Living Earthlife: Natal's Vietnamese cocktail* (pamphlet), pp. 1-2.

<sup>30</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 6-12.10.1989, p. 10; *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, pp. 27-28, 100, 104.

Campaigns against animal cruelty and for animal rights received a boost with the founding of very active ENGOs such as South Africans for the Abolition of Vivisection (1990), the Seal Action Group (1990), Save our Seals (1990) and the Front for Animal Liberation and Conservation of Nature (1989/90).<sup>31</sup> General conservation and greening projects were also launched by groups like the Edendale Conservation of Open Spaces Society (1989), the Captrust Plant Protection Group (1990), Trees for Africa (1990) and the Aliwal Shoals Action Group (1991).<sup>32</sup>

Community-based environmental work continued to expand with the establishment of ENGOs like the Namakwalandse Burgersvereniging (1989), the Tirelo Sechaba Youth Project (1980, Soweto), the Association for Rural Advancement (1990), the Khayelitsha Environment Action Group (1991) and the Alex Enviro-Protection Group (1991, Alexandra).<sup>33</sup> Environmental education, on the other hand, was promoted by the Environmental Film Workshop (1989), the Environmental Educator's Forum (1990) and Whole Africa Promotions (1991).<sup>34</sup>

Two important environmental research ENGOs were also established, namely the Group for Environmental Monitoring (1991, Johannesburg) and the Environmental Monitoring Group (1992, Western Cape).<sup>35</sup> On a professional level the Field Guide Association of Southern Africa (1989) and the International Association for Impact Assessment of South Africa (1992) were established. The latter's main objective was the promotion of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for all proposed developments.<sup>36</sup> The need for formal co-operation between ENGOs and other

<sup>31</sup> Ledger, p. 243; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, p. 1; *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, p. 78; *Beeld*, 5.7.1990, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, pp. 16, 23-24, 96. For more information on Trees for Africa see e.g. J. Searll, "Trees for Africa" in *Conserva* 5(4), July 1990, pp. 8-11; J. Searll, "Bome vir Afrika" in *Conserva* 6(4), July/August 1991, pp. 8-9.

<sup>33</sup> D. Fig, "Flowers in the desert: community struggles in Namaqualand" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 122-123; Cooper, "People, the environment, and change", pp. 23-24, 26-29, 49-50, 60-61.

<sup>34</sup> *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, pp. 81, 83, 86.

<sup>35</sup> Vollgraaff, pp. 110-111; Cooper, "People, the environment, and change", pp. 54-56; H. Rukato, "The Group for Environmental Monitoring" in *Urbanisation and Health Newsletter* 28, March 1996, pp. 99-101.

<sup>36</sup> Vollgraaff, p. 109; *The Green Pages, 1991/1992*, p. 81.

interested parties was manifested in the founding of groups such as the Green Coalition (1991) and the Border Environmental Network (1992).<sup>37</sup>

Environmental issues were further addressed on religious and philosophical levels with groups like the Bundu Venture (1989), promoting a Christian approach to the environment. The Elmwood Institute, on the other hand, promoted the ecological perspective (mostly deep green) of Fritjof Capra.<sup>38</sup> Very active ENGOs with broad environmental agendas like the Green Action Forum (1989, Cape Town), the Environmental Co-operation and Organisation (1989/90, Johannesburg) and Eco-programme (1991, Cape Town) were also established. These groups were mostly active within specific geographical areas in which their support was based.<sup>39</sup>

In an article on environmentalism in South Africa, Kobus Müller writes that predominantly white ENGOs will continue to play a crucial role as long as they stay relevant.<sup>40</sup> The question as to what constitutes relevance and who determines it is open to debate. For most of the politicised ENGOs established between 1988 and 1992 (like ELA, Eco-programme and the Green Action Forum) the majority of the predominantly white ENGOs were irrelevant because their environmental agendas did not address the "real issues". But, "real issues" differ considerably from organisation to organisation and among the general public. This in turn meant that, despite radical changes in the broad agenda of the environmental movement, ENGOs such as the Botanical Society of South Africa, the Wilderness Leadership School, the South African Ornithological Society and the Tree Society of Southern Africa, remained relevant because they were perceived as such by their support base.

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and the Rhino and Elephant Foundation were viewed as relevant by the new ENGOs, simply because they were highly critical of the government's involvement in illicit trade in ivory and rhinoceros horn (see section

<sup>37</sup> Cooper, "People, the environment, and change", pp. 9-10, 20-23.

<sup>38</sup> *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, pp. 78, 96-97. Publications of Capra that deal with the environment include: F. Capra, *The turning point: science, society and the rising culture*, and C. Spretnak and F. Capra, *Green politics: the global promise*.

<sup>39</sup> F. Khan, *Contemporary South African environmental response: an historical and socio-political evaluation with particular reference to blacks* (M.A. dissertation), pp. 103-104; Vollgraaff, pp. 113-115; *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, p. 97.

<sup>40</sup> Müller, p. 116.

5.4). The Wildlife Society, as the biggest ENGO in the country, remained relevant to its support base and had 28 000 adult, 12 000 junior and 120 000 corporate members by 1989.<sup>41</sup> In addition to its conservation and environmental education activities, the Society launched its Ozone Awareness Campaign in 1988.<sup>42</sup> This campaign was the first in South Africa to focus on the depletion of the ozone layer and that started to insist on a reduction in the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the country. The Society also pressured the government to ratify the Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (Vienna, 1985) and the Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (Montreal, 1987) to which South Africa was not party. The government ratified both the protocol and the convention in January 1990.<sup>43</sup>

Amidst a number of chemical spills that contaminated river networks (e.g. the spill at Sappi's Ngodwana Mill in 1989) key executives of the country's top industrial corporations organised themselves into the Industrial Environmental Forum (IEF) in 1990 to facilitate the discussion of environmental matters. The main objective of the IEF was to promote environmental values within industry itself. In 1991 the IEF organised the Southern African International Conference on Environmental Management (SAICEM) which focused on environmental management within industry. SAICEM was such a success that the IEF was invited to send a delegation to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, June 1992; see section 6.6).<sup>44</sup>

### 6.3 The greening of South African politics

In 1989 the Wildlife Society conducted a survey to test the environmental attitude of the candidates who made themselves available for the 6 September 1989 general election. The result thereof was a good indication of just how politicians in the

<sup>41</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 6-12.10.1989, p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> The ozone layer became an international issue in 1985 when researchers discovered that 50% of the ozone in the upper stratosphere over Antarctica was being destroyed annually from September to December. Researchers identified CFCs as being the primary cause of this depletion. See G.T. Miller, *Living in the environment: principles, connections, and solutions* (9<sup>th</sup> edition), pp. 318-323 for more information on the hole in the ozone layer.

<sup>43</sup> I. Macdonald *et al.*, "The Ozone Awareness Campaign" in *African Wildlife* 45(2), 1991, pp. 82-84.

<sup>44</sup> "A green forum for corporate: a conversation with Industrial Environmental Forum chairman, Dr John Maree" in *Environmental Action*, October/November 1991, pp 10-14, 17; K. Ireton, "From SAICEM to Rio" in *Environmental Action*, January/February 1992, p. 17.

country perceived the natural environment. Of the 752 candidates that stood in the election, only 55 took the trouble to fill in the questionnaire. Notable absentees were the State President, F.W. de Klerk, and the Minister of Environment Affairs, Gert Kotzé.<sup>45</sup>

The results of the survey showed that 31% of those that responded were in favour of maintaining the *status quo* in environmental administration, and more than a quarter rated visiting the Kruger National Park (KNP) as being more important than improving the quality of life in general. Most of the candidates supported taxing those who pollute, the adoption of effective air pollution legislation and an increase in the penalties for poaching. Of the three white political parties that contested the election, only the Democratic Party (DP) brought out a policy paper on the environment for the election. The Conservative Party (CP) and the NP did not identify the environment as an election issue.<sup>46</sup>

Truth is, the environment was not an issue in the 1989 general election. The tricameral parliament, the political reform measures and the economic decline were the real issues around which the election was contested.<sup>47</sup> This situation changed for the better after the 1989 election mainly because highly publicised campaigns such as that against Thor Chemicals and the annual seal culling (see section 6.5) forced politicians to take up definite stances on environmental issues. By linking apartheid to environmental degradation in South Africa, ENGOS like ELA made it necessary for anti-apartheid groups to formulate statements on the environment, while the founding of two green political parties attempted to introduce green political principles into the South African political system.

Colin Slater launched South Africa's first green political party, the Ecology Party, in Natal on 27 November 1989. The party concerned itself with existing environmental degradation, environmental legislation and stood for compulsory environmental education. The promotion of environmental ethics relating to a plethora of issues

<sup>45</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 1-7.9.1989, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> See W.H. Strong, *Die algemene verkiesings van 1987 en 1989 en die politieke gebeure daartussen* (M.A thesis), pp. 186-219 for the issues over which the 1989 general election was contested.

including housing, employment, land use, health care, prison conditions, inflation, drugs and noise control was also high on its priority list. Though the party actively participated in the Save St Lucia campaign (see section 6.5.1), it received limited support and was often labelled a one-man-show. It had no impact on politics in South Africa, simply because it opted to operate outside politics in order to promote environmental awareness. The party confined its activities to Yeoville, Johannesburg after Slater resigned in 1990 and thereafter saw itself as an interest group rather than the originally intended political party.<sup>48</sup>

The second green political party, the Green Party of South Africa, was launched late in 1991 in Cape Town. The main objective of the party was to obtain direct parliamentary representation in order to provide environmental interests with a "parliamentary voice" and legislative powers. By the end of 1992, the Green Party of South Africa was still trying to establish a national infrastructure and had no detailed policy on the environment apart from stating that heritage conservation coupled with sustainable utilisation were pivotal to it. It became the first green political party to participate in elections in South Africa when it took part in the regional election in the Western Cape in 1994. However, it only managed to draw 0.12% of the votes (2 611 out of a total of 2 148 456).<sup>49</sup>

Shortly before the launch of the Ecology Party, DP spokesperson on the environment, Rupert Lorimer, remarked that a green political party was not really feasible in South Africa because the environment was not the only issue.<sup>50</sup> The limited public support for the two green political parties in the country proved him correct insofar as the environment was not the only issue with the electorate. The political situation in South Africa at the time further ensured that green politics never really gained ground in the country. The public, in general, preferred to place their political future in the hands of the traditional white political parties and anti-apartheid organisations, which made their position on environmental issues far more important than that of the two green parties.

<sup>48</sup> *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, p. 109; Vollgraaff, pp. 98-99; J. Cock, "Ozone-friendly politics" in *Work in Progress* 66, May 1990, p. 29; *Vrye Weekblad* (Ecology supplement), 15.12.1989, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> A. Hoogervorst, "The Green Party of SA...who?" in *Eagle Bulletin* 3(2), 1992, pp. 3-4; Vollgraaff, pp. 99-100.

<sup>50</sup> *The Star*, 28.10.1989, p. 8.

The Wildlife Society's survey in 1989 revealed that both the NP and the CP had no policy documents on the environment. The CP did voice its concern on some environmental issues in the survey, stating that it was worried about the air pollution in the Eastern Transvaal Highveld (ETH) and that, if it came to power, it would reintroduce influx control to prevent despoilation caused by urban squatting.<sup>51</sup> Two years later, in response to a survey conducted by the popular magazine *Femina*, the NP tabled a policy document in which it stated that it is the right of every inhabitant of South Africa "to live, work and relax in a safe, productive, healthy and aesthetically and culturally acceptable environment".<sup>52</sup> Their broad policy document further promoted the integrated environmental management model, developed by the Council for the Environment between 1985 and 1989. The CP, on the other hand, aligned itself with the World Conservation Strategy (1980) when it identified its environmental goal as sustaining all forms of life in the country, while also accommodating development. The only prerequisite was that this should be organised along the lines of separate development.<sup>53</sup>

The DP was the first political party to adopt a definite stance on environmental issues. In their 1989 election manifesto the party outlined four main ecological principles, namely the need for a watchdog environmental protection body (along the lines of the US Environmental Protection Agency), the need for stronger action against poachers and dealers in illegal ivory and rhinoceros horn, the promotion of the use of lead-free petrol, and the curbing all forms of pollution.<sup>54</sup> These ecological principles were followed by the publication of a detailed environment policy document late in 1989 in which the DP called for the extensive restructuring of the Department of Environment Affairs and the reformulation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 73 of 1989) which it perceived as being inadequate.<sup>55</sup> The policy document addressed a number of environmental issues including soil erosion, the exploitation of resources, water management, atmospheric pollution, toxic and hazardous waste, and marine pollution.

<sup>51</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 1-7.9.1989, p. 7; *The Weekly Mail*, 6-12.10.1989, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> The NP policy document on the environment as quoted by J. L'Ange, "Who's the greenest of them all?" in *Femina*, February 1991, p. 46.

<sup>53</sup> L'Ange, pp. 46, 48.

<sup>54</sup> Strong, p. 201.

<sup>55</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 1-7.9.1989, p. 7.



The gist of the document was that the existing environmental management system in place was ineffective, and the party proposed structural changes that would place the environment higher on the government's list of priorities.<sup>56</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the link between apartheid and environmental degradation in South Africa made it necessary for anti-apartheid organisations such as the ANC and the PAC to issue policy statements on the environment. The ANC led the way when Max Sisulu, the head of the ANC's Department of Economics and Planning, issued his organisation's first statement on the environment in December 1989. The ANC laid the blame for all the environmental problems in South Africa on the apartheid system and stated that the system not only involved the manipulation of racial groups, but also of natural resources. Widespread overgrazing, soil erosion and land deterioration were seen as "inevitable destructive consequences of apartheid". It adopted a stance against nuclear energy in the belief that the country had enough coal and solar resources to produce sufficient energy for the whole country. The organisation also supported the tendency to involve communities in wildlife conservation, which it saw as an answer to counter poaching.<sup>57</sup> This first policy statement remained the cornerstone of the ANC's environmental policy in the period under discussion. The environment was incorporated into the struggle agenda with metaphors such as "we are fighting to free the land, the sky, the waters as well as the people".<sup>58</sup>

The PAC released its policy document on the environment in October 1990 in which the organisation stated that introducing a democracy in South Africa was a prerequisite for the successful addressing of the country's environmental problems. The document acknowledged that black South Africans regarded environmental considerations with indifference and hostility and addressed specific issues such as alternative energy, toxic waste and air pollution. Emphasis was further placed on the need for balance between environmental planning and the provision of basic needs.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> For more details see Phia Steyn Private Document Collection: Democratic Party, Policy position document - environment.

<sup>57</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 1-7.12.1989, p. 10; Khan, pp. 69-71; L'Ange, p. 47.

<sup>58</sup> See for example A. Cameron, "Interview with Albie Sachs" in *Earthyear* 4, Autumn 1993, pp. 5-9; A. Sachs, *Protecting human rights in a new South Africa*, pp. 139-148; B. Jack, "The importance of environmental considerations for development in a non-racial democratic South Africa" in D. Hollowes (ed.), *Hidden faces. Environment, development, justice: South Africa and the global context*, pp. 266-272.

<sup>59</sup> L'Ange, p. 48; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, p. 13.

Concern for the environment was not shared by all anti-apartheid organisations, with Azapo, for example, stating that "we have better things to do than get on the bandwagon with ignorant white people who need an interest to fill their time".<sup>60</sup> Between 1989 and 1992 trade unions, on the other hand, began to recognise environmental issues as important. Of particular interest to the unions were industrial health and occupational safety, especially after news of the Thor Chemicals scandal broke in 1990 (see section 6.5.2). Trade unions such as the South African Chemical Workers Union, the Paper, Print, Wood and Allied Workers' Union, the Food and Allied Workers' Union, and Black Mining, Construction and Allied Workers' Union were among the first to address environmental issues.<sup>61</sup>

#### **6.4 The South African government and the environment**

The emergence of new environmentalism in South Africa undermined the dominant position of the government within the environmental movement from 1988 onwards. Though a number of factors (including the questioning of the government's environmental agenda and stewardship) contributed to this state of affairs, the single most important contributory factor was the fact that between 1988 and 1992, the government constantly appeared weak and unprepared when environment-related issues made headlines.

Double standards, poor enforcement of environmental legislation in place, and constant negative reaction from the government, especially the Minister of Environment Affairs, when faced with opposition from non-governmental role-players, hastened the demise of government importance. By 1989, when the possibility of dune mining at St Lucia became a major issue, it was already clear that the government had lost the initiative and this would remain the case for the rest of the period under discussion.

<sup>60</sup> Dr Gomolemo Mokae, vice president of Azapo in 1992, as quoted by L'Ange, p. 48.

<sup>61</sup> Khan, p. 81; *The Weekly Mail*, 6-12.10.1989, p. 10; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, p. 13.

The Department of Environment Affairs and its corresponding minister came under fire during the campaigns that were fought against environmental degradation and abuse. The Department itself was perceived to be a weak administrative department that was staffed by non-professionals. To environmental scientists like Richard Fuggle, this explained the lack of environmental policy formulation, development and effective implementation by the Department.<sup>62</sup>

The Minister of Environment Affairs contributed a great deal to this poor image of the Department, and especially so Minister Gert Kotzé (1987-1990). Kotzé first infuriated non-governmental role-players in 1989 during the campaign to save St Lucia when he told a Cape audience that he was "unimpressed" with the 200 000 signatures on *The Star's* petition against the proposed mining activities. He went on record as saying that most of the people did not know what they were signing and claimed that half of the signatures were from children. In his view, people who supported "green"<sup>63</sup> organisations were fanatics who did not listen to reason, and who were trying to sabotage development in the country.<sup>64</sup>

This attitude of Kotzé's ensured him the status of the most hated figure in the environmental movement and he subsequently became the embodiment of the system that ENGOs wanted to change. His unpopular stance on St Lucia was followed in 1990 with equally unpopular stances on Thor Chemicals and the annual seal harvesting. At the end of 1990 Kotzé lost his Environment Affairs portfolio and was succeeded by Louis Pienaar. Though Kotzé's effectiveness as Minister of Environment Affairs is open to much criticism, he can be credited for placing media and public attention on a ministerial portfolio whose work had gone by largely unnoticed in the past.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> "Pretoria and the professionals" in *Environmental Action*, September 1990, pp. 28-29.

<sup>63</sup> Kotzé used the term "the greens" to refer to all individuals and ENGOs that dared to oppose the government and to whom the environment was a political issue. Interview: G.J. Kotzé, Riebeeck Kasteel, 27.3.1998.

<sup>64</sup> Jan Giliomee Private Document Collection (JGPDC), Habitat Council: W.S. Boshoff - G.J. Kotzé, 15.1.1990 (letter) and G.J. Kotzé - W.S. Boshoff, 22.1.1990 (letter).

<sup>65</sup> See for example J. Clarke, *Back to earth: South Africa's environmental challenges*, p. 151; P. Lukey, C. Albertyn and H. Coetzee, "Wasting away: South Africa and the global waste problem" in Cock and Koch (eds), p. 170; Interview: J. Clarke, Johannesburg, 5.3.1998.

Despite its non-professional staff and a controversial minister that headed it, the Department of Environment Affairs did contribute to the environmental movement between 1988 and 1992. The contributions included the continuation of existing projects such as the South African Natural Heritage Programme, the sponsoring of environmental research, the commissioning of investigations into the status of waste management and pollution control and the processing and disposal of dangerous wastes in the country, and the drafting of new environmental legislation.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the Department was involved in the government's ratification of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (Montreal, 1987), and in preparing for the country's accession to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel, 1989). South Africa acceded to the Montreal Protocol on 15 January 1990 and, despite Cabinet approval being granted in 1989, to the Basel Convention only on 5 May 1994.<sup>67</sup>

Apart from the activities of the Department of Environment Affairs, the most important contributions of the government to the environmental movement between 1988 and 1989 were the Environment Conservation Act (no 73 of 1989) and the report of the President's Council on a national environmental management system for South Africa.

#### **6.4.1 The Environment Conservation Act (no 73 of 1989)**

According to Fuggle and André Rabie, the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 73 of 1989), that repealed the Act of 1982 (see section 4.3.3), constituted a major milestone in the development of South African environmental law.<sup>68</sup> The act was preceded by extensive deliberations encompassing three official and one unofficial draft bills over a period of two years. A characteristic of the deliberations was the unfamiliar public participation that followed the open invitation of the first two draft bills (29 May 1987 and 30 October 1987) for interested parties to

<sup>66</sup> *Annual report of the Department of Environment Affairs, 1989-1990* (RP 29/1991), pp. 53, 55, 58, 61.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58; M. Kidd, *Environmental law: a South African guide*, p. 142; D.J. Devine and M.G. Erasmus, "International environmental law" in R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (eds), *Environmental management in South Africa*, pp. 169, 171.

<sup>68</sup> M.A. Rabie and R.F. Fuggle, "The rise of environmental concern" in Fuggle and Rabie (eds), p. 23.

voice their opinions, criticism and recommendations. The final version of the Environment Conservation Bill was tabled in 1989 and, after some amendments, was formally adopted as the Environment Conservation Act (no 73 of 1989) on 9 June 1989.<sup>69</sup>

The 1989 Environment Conservation Act was a considerable improvement on its predecessor of 1982 in that it provided for the effective protection and controlled utilisation of the environment. The 1982 Act merely provided for the co-ordination of all actions directed at or liable to have an influence on the environment. But, like its predecessor, the 1989 Act did not constitute a codification of existing environment-related legislation and was thus not an all-embracing environmental act.<sup>70</sup>

An important provision of the Act was that it allowed for the Minister of Environment Affairs to declare a statutory environmental policy, by notice in the *Government Gazette*, with which all administrative bodies had to comply. Initially the minister had to obtain the concurrence of the Minister of Finance as well as all other ministers whose departments might be affected by such a policy. This provision was amended by the Environment Conservation Amendment Act (no 79 of 1992) in 1992, which required only consultation of such ministers prior to determining the policy. The Minister of Environment Affairs did not declare any such policy between 1989 and 1992, despite the formulation of a comprehensive model for such a policy by the Council for the Environment.<sup>71</sup>

The Act also took the first tentative steps towards making EIAs compulsory by granting the Minister discretionary powers to declare certain designated areas or activities, to be affected areas or activities. Once an affected area was declared, authorisation for carrying on with developments in the area was subject to an EIA.

<sup>69</sup> M.A. Rabie, "Environment Conservation Act" in Fuggle and Rabie (eds), p. 100; J.I. Glazewski, "The Kruger Park Conference and the Environment Conservation Bill" in *African Wildlife* 43(1), 1989, pp. 12-13; J. Giliomee, "New environmental legislation" in *African Wildlife* 43(1), 1989, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Rabie, "Environment Conservation Act", p. 99; P.D. Glavovic, "Some thoughts of an environmental lawyer on the implications of the Environment Conservation Act 73 of 1989: a case of missed opportunities" in *The South African Law Journal* 107(1), February 1990, p. 107.

<sup>71</sup> J.I. Glazewski, "Current and future directions in South African environmental law" in *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 13(1), May 1991, p. 20; M.A. Rabie, "The Environment Conservation Act and its implementation" in *The South African Journal of Environmental Law and Policy* 1(1), March

The same rule applied to activities that were declared affected (i.e. affecting the natural environment). Again the Minister did not make use of these powers between 1989 and 1992, which rendered the provision useless.<sup>72</sup>

Other important provisions of the Act included, *inter alia*, the right of interested persons to request reasons for administrative decisions that affected their environmental interests, the creation of a Board of Investigation for controversial environmental issues and a new classification system for protected areas. The Act further provided for the continuation of the Council for the Environment, and the creation of a new statutory body, the Committee for Environmental Management.<sup>73</sup> The latter was a continuation and extension of the National Committee for Nature Conservation that was formed back in 1974. The main objective of the Committee was to provide a forum where all governmental departments involved in environmental matters could liaise with one another in an attempt to co-ordinate the fragmented environmental management system of the government.<sup>74</sup> The Committee was short-lived and had ceased to function by 1991.<sup>75</sup>

While the Environment Conservation Act (no 73 of 1989) was a big improvement on its predecessor, its success depended largely on the Minister of Environment Affairs who had to use his discretionary powers first before action was possible. Despite internal and external pressures, the Minister did not make use of any of the discretionary powers granted to him between 1989 and 1992.<sup>76</sup>

Other environment-related legislation passed between 1988 and 1992 included the Sea Fisheries Act (no 12 of 1988), the Legal Succession to the South African Transport Services Act (no 9 of 1989), the Less Formal Townships Establishment Act (no 113

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1994, pp. 113, 116. See Raad vir die Omgewing, *'n Benadering tot 'n nasionale omgewingsbeleid en strategie vir Suid-Afrika* for the environmental model developed by the Council for the Environment.

<sup>72</sup> J.I. Glazewski, "A new Environment Conservation Act: an awakening of environmental law" in *De Rebus* 263, November 1989, pp. 873-874; Glazewski, "Current and future directions...", pp. 20-21.

<sup>73</sup> Glazewski, "Current and future directions...", pp. 21-23; Glazewski, "A new Environment...", pp. 874-878.

<sup>74</sup> Rabie, "Environment Conservation Act", pp. 107-108.

<sup>75</sup> *Verslag van die drie komitees van die Presidentsraad oor 'n nasionale omgewingsbestuurstelsel* (PR 1/1991), pp. 219-220.

<sup>76</sup> See Rabie, "The Environment Conservation Act and its implementation", pp. 113-125 for a discussion of the implementation of the Act.

of 1991) and the Physical Planning Act (no 125 of 1991).<sup>77</sup> Government concern for the environment also found expression in the Minerals Act (no 50 of 1991) in terms of which the rehabilitation of the environment by mining companies became compulsory for the first time in South African history.<sup>78</sup>

#### 6.4.2 The report of the President's Council (1991)

On 8 December 1989 the State President, F.W. de Klerk, requested the President's Council to investigate and make recommendations on a policy for a national environmental management system, with particular reference to the ecological, economic, social and legal implications thereof. The scope of the investigation was expanded in May 1991 to include a study of the possible effect that the implementation of the White Paper on Land Reform (1991) might have on the conservation and protection of the environment and resources. Three committees of the President's Council, namely those for Constitutional Affairs, Social Affairs and Economic Affairs, participated in the investigation. Their final report was tabled on 22 October 1991.<sup>79</sup>

The *Report of the Three Committees of the President's Council on a National Environmental Management System* represents the most extensive investigation ever conducted into the management of environmental affairs in South Africa. The 300-odd page report dealt with various issues including demographic growth, land distribution, water conservation, pollution, fauna and flora conservation, waste disposal, environmental research, the structure and functions of the Department of Environment Affairs and the Council for the Environment, on which a great number of recommendations were made.<sup>80</sup>

A central theme of the report was the pivotal role that the Department of Environment Affairs would have to play in the implementation of a cohesive environmental

<sup>77</sup> See Kidd, pp. 111, 136, 156 and 158 for more details on the legislation mentioned.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-119. See also L. Pienaar, "Speech to the Earthlife Africa international environment conference" in Hallowes (ed.), pp. 262-264; Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, *Aide-mémoire for the preparation of environmental management programme reports for prospecting and mining*, pp. 1-33.

<sup>79</sup> PR 1/1991, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

management system. To facilitate this role, the report recommended the extension and reorganisation of the Department, which included the creation of a pollution control branch that would become the sole enforcer of pollution legislation in the country. The report further addressed the "powerlessness" of the Minister of Environment Affairs who, in terms of the Environment Conservation Act (no 73 of 1989), had to obtain permission from all other ministers involved before being able to set environmental policy and to require EIAs of certain proposed developments. It recommended amending the Act to the extent that the Minister merely had to inform all other ministers involved.<sup>81</sup>

Other major recommendations included the devolution of management responsibilities to the provinces, the rationalisation of all criminal penalties for environmental offences, the establishment of an environmental appeal tribunal, the publishing of regular reports on the state of the South African environment and the acquisition of more land for national parks and nature reserves which were not ecologically viable.<sup>82</sup> The report identified the population growth rate, combined with the accompanying poverty, as the single greatest threat to the environment, and called upon those involved in the Population Development Programme to step up their activities in an attempt to lower the population growth rate of the country.<sup>83</sup>

The report was highly critical of the Council for the Environment and recommended that it be replaced with an Environment Council that would be more representative of all role-players in the environmental movement. Whereas membership of the Council for the Environment was restricted to individuals with proven environmental expertise, the envisaged new Council would allow for the inclusion of individuals who were merely interested in environmental issues and did not necessarily have the appropriate professional qualifications and background. It was recommended that the new Council not only continue with the work of the Council for the Environment, but that it should also be responsible for an annual scientific report on the state of the

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217-219, 224-240.

<sup>82</sup> J. Yeld, "The President's Council and environmental management in South Africa" in *African Wildlife* 46(1), 1992, p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> PR 1/1991, pp. 9-11.



environment and the formulation of environmental regulations for the industrial sector.<sup>84</sup>

The President's Council report did not meet the expectations of many role-players in the environmental movement. It was criticised, *inter alia*, for not exploring the idea of an independent, professionally staffed statutory body with significant policymaking authority, for downgrading the Council for the Environment (being the main environmental policymaking body within governmental structures) to a professionally unequipped body, and for denying the need for radical structural adjustments to the environmental management system already in place. The report was also problematic because it had been drawn up by the President's Council and was consequently not acceptable to anti-apartheid organisations such as the ANC and PAC. Both organisations did not submit written or oral evidence, and did not react to its content in public after its publication in October 1991.<sup>85</sup> Despite the criticism and unacceptability (to some) of the report, it was, according to Fuggle, important in that it signalled governmental recognition of the importance and scope of the environmental challenges that faced South Africa at the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>86</sup>

### 6.5 Major environmental campaigns between 1988 and 1992

Numerous environmental campaigns were launched by the non-governmental sector of the environmental movement in South Africa between 1988 and 1992. Limited space does not allow for a comprehensive discussion of all the campaigns and this section will therefore focus only on the major environmental campaigns under the following headings: proposed mining activities in ecologically sensitive areas; toxic and hazardous waste disposal; industrial pollution; anti animal-cruelty; gill netting and marine conservation, and agrochemicals.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220-224; R. Fuggle, "The President's Council report: only a beginning" in *Environmental Action*, October/November 1991, pp. 38-39. The Council for the Environment came under attack again in 1994 because of its lack of diverse representation. Opinions were voiced that it should be replaced with a national forum that had to include women, rural and urban communities, trade unions and NGOs. See D. Fig, "Environment" in *Work in Progress* 97, July 1994, pp. 34-35.

<sup>85</sup> No political party or anti-apartheid organisation presented written or oral evidence. PR 1/1991, pp. 322-330. See also Fuggle, pp. 38-39; Yeld, pp. 23-25.

<sup>86</sup> Fuggle, p. 38.

### 6.5.1 Proposed mining activities in ecologically sensitive areas

A decade after the controversy surrounding proposed coking coal mining in the KNP, the 1989 proposal to mine the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia unleashed unprecedented protest and outrage from ENGOs in South Africa. The mining company involved, Richards Bay Minerals (RBM), acquired extensive prospecting rights (for heavy minerals) along the Natal coast in 1976, stretching from Mtunzini in the south to Cape Vidal in the north and inland for approximately 5 km. Twice before 1989 RBM had had its mining rights withdrawn in two ecological sensitive areas, namely Mapelane and Cape Vidal, due to the successful intervention of the Wildlife Society.<sup>87</sup>

In 1989 RBM applied for its prospecting lease of the Kingsa/Tojan lease area to be changed to a mining lease and thereby triggered the biggest environmental campaign in South African history. The main reason for the campaign against possible titanium mining was the fact that the Kingsa/Tojan lease was part of the St Lucia System. The latter was designated a wetland of international importance on 2 October 1986 by the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Water Fowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention, 1971) to which South Africa became the fifth contracting party in 1975. Furthermore, Lake St Lucia is the largest estuarine system in Africa and a potential World Heritage Site. As an internationally recognised wetland, South Africa undertook to preserve the St Lucia system in terms of the provisions of the Ramsar Convention.<sup>88</sup>

The Save St Lucia Campaign brought together a diversity of interest groups, including the Wildlife Society, the Natal Parks Board, ELA, the Zululand Environment Alliance, the St Lucia Action Group, *The Star* newspaper and private landowners in the area. Their position was that the planned dredge mining of the dunes would have a detrimental effect on the natural environment, and they were not convinced that RBM

<sup>87</sup> J. Ridl, "St Lucia: the war rages on" in *African Wildlife* 44(1), 1990, pp. 13, 15; "St Lucia: facts and fallacies" in *Conserva* 7(3), May/June 1992, pp. 8-9; R. MacPherson, "St Lucia: a titanium struggle. A case for dune mining" in *Rotating the cube: environmental strategies for the 1990s*, p. 85.

<sup>88</sup> "St Lucia: facts and fallacies", pp. 9-10; Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, *South African national report to the Ramsar Convention, 1996*, pp. 24-25.

would be able to rehabilitate the environment to an acceptable level.<sup>89</sup> RBM, on the other hand, emphasised the financial benefits of the project (between R2,5 and R5 billion) and pointed out its good environmental track record which had earned them the Environmental Planning Professions Interdisciplinary Committee's award for excellence in environmental management earlier in 1989. The latter award was for its acclaimed dune rehabilitation programme.<sup>90</sup> A third role-player emerged during the struggle, namely the workers of RBM, many of whom were forcibly removed from the specific area in the 1970s to make way for the nature reserve at St Lucia. These workers directed attention towards the fact that no one had acted on the local community's behalf when they faced removal and that it was difficult for them now to support the conservation of the dunes from which they had been evicted.<sup>91</sup>

The government was caught in between the opposing sides and initially appeared to be supportive of RBM's mining application. The Minister of Environment Affairs, Gert Kotzé, reacted negatively towards the Save St Lucia Campaign to the extent that he openly questioned and criticised *The Star's* petition against the proposed mining, a petition that had more than 200 000 signatures.<sup>92</sup> The government, however, did take notice of the opposition to the mining of St Lucia and decided to delay a decision on the issue pending the completion of a comprehensive EIA. A government-appointed panel ruled against dune mining in 1993 and opted for eco-tourism to provide the necessary revenues to enable community development in the area.<sup>93</sup>

Another ecologically sensitive area that was threatened with the possibility of mining activities was Chapman's Peak along the Cape Peninsula. Serina (Pty.) Ltd (a subsidiary of Sanlam) applied for a mining lease on the De Goede Hoop Estate in the Noordhoek Valley in 1989. It intended to undertake opencast mining of kaolin (used

<sup>89</sup> See for example A. Forbes, "St Lucia: a titanium struggle. The case against dune mining" in *Rotating the cube: environmental strategies for the 1990s*, pp. 89-92; T. Ferrar, "Politics and economics of mining St Lucia" in *African Wildlife* 47(2), 1993, p. 51; Ridl, pp. 10-16; A. Bannister and F. Bridgland, "Striking the balance" in *Leadership* 8(10), December/January 1989/1990, pp. 108-118.

<sup>90</sup> See for example MacPherson, pp. 85-88; H.F. Goedhals, "Dune-mining in Zululand: mining company's point of view" in *African Wildlife* 43(4), 1989, pp. 176-177; "Ensuring the future of Lake St Lucia" in *Environmental Action*, May/June 1991, pp. 36-39; J. Goedhals, "St Lucia: a test case for conservation and development in South Africa" in *African Wildlife* 44(3), 1990, pp. 140-150.

<sup>91</sup> Koch, pp. 31-32.

<sup>92</sup> JGPDC, Habitat Council: W.S. Boshoff - G.J. Kotzé, 15.1.1990 (letter); *Beeld*, 15.9.1989, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> R. Preston-Whyte, "Towards sustainable development in the Lake St Lucia area, South Africa" in *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 49, 1996, pp. 180-181.

in the manufacturing of ceramics, porcelain, bone china, paper, insecticide, pharmaceuticals and paint) for a period of twenty years, during which time a total area of 16 ha would be affected. The Save Chapman's Peak Action Group was established in October 1989 to oppose the proposed mining activities. Together with ELA (Cape Town) they succeeded in slowing down the process and by the end of 1992, the Noordhoek Valley was still intact.<sup>94</sup>

### 6.5.2 Toxic and hazardous waste disposal

Toxic and hazardous waste disposal became an international environmental issue in 1988 when scandals such as the "homeless" toxic waste carrier ship, the *Karin-B*, and numerous deals to dispose of American and European toxic waste in the developing world, notably Africa, made headlines in the international media.<sup>95</sup> In South Africa articles on the possibility of toxic and hazardous waste importation began to appear in 1987 in which the government held that they had a "no importation" policy. By 1989, however, the financial benefits began to outweigh the risks involved, and in February 1989 the Minister of Environment Affairs, Gert Kotzé, reported to parliament that the government was considering building a toxic and hazardous waste disposal facility to cater for the unwanted waste of the developed world.<sup>96</sup> However, soon after Kotzé made governmental intentions known, a series of highly publicised incidents involving toxic and hazardous waste disposal or the possibility thereof made national headlines, which forced the government to abandon its own plans and to reject applications from certain companies to build waste disposal facilities in South Africa.

One of the first incidents involved the Cape Town based company Peacock Bay Environment (PBE) which applied in 1989 for permission from the government to construct a R400 million waste incineration plant in the vicinity of Alexander Bay on the west coast. PBE's Managing Director, Sidney Saunders, challenged ELA to a series of national debates around the issue of toxic waste importation. Three debates

<sup>94</sup> H. Sherwin, "Save Chapman's Peak" in *Leaflet* 1, 1992, p. 7; Albertyn, "Greening South Africa", p. 42.

<sup>95</sup> See for example B. Wynne, "The toxic waste trade: international issues and options" in *Third World Quarterly* 11(3), July 1989, pp. 120-122; H. Schissel, "The deadly trade: toxic waste dumping in Africa" in *Africa Report* 33(5), September/October 1988, pp. 47-49; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, p. 43.

<sup>96</sup> Earthlife Africa (Johannesburg), Internal briefing documents: South Africa's hazardous waste crisis and the rush to burn, pp. 1-2.

were held in October 1989 in Pietermaritzburg, Durban (televised by the television station M-Net) and Cape Town respectively. The final debate was scheduled for 7 November 1989 in Johannesburg, but was cancelled by Saunders, because he would "no longer stand for verbal attacks from radical leftist thugs".<sup>97</sup>

These debates were extremely important because they focused public attention on the dangers involved in the disposal of toxic and hazardous waste. They also showed that the public, in general, was against South Africa catering for the unwanted waste of the developed world. The public outcry around toxic and hazardous waste in 1989 led directly to the Department of Environment Affairs commissioning the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), to carry out an investigation into waste management and pollution control in the country. Due to the negative publicity, Saunders withdrew the application in 1990. But he returned again in June 1992 when it was announced that PBE (by now Peacock Bay Environmental Services) had obtained conditional permission to develop an incineration plant on the farm Holfontein near Springs.<sup>98</sup>

Another well-publicised campaign against toxic waste disposal was launched in April 1990 when it became known that workers at a mercury recycling plant in Cato Ridge had suffered chronic mercury poisoning. The company involved, the British-owned Thor Chemicals (Pty.) Ltd which came into existence in 1963, was initially involved only in the manufacturing of mercury (used in the paint, textile and chemical industries) and non-mercurial compounds. In 1976 the company expanded its operations to include the recovery of mercury from spent catalyst. In the 1980s Thor Chemicals extended their operations and obtained contracts to recycle mercury for seven companies from the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom,

<sup>97</sup> Saunders as quoted in *ibid.*, p. 3. See also *Die Burger*, 28.10.1989, p. 11; *Sunday Times*, 29.10.1989, p. 18.

<sup>98</sup> Earthlife Africa (Johannesburg), Internal briefing documents: South Africa's hazardous waste crisis and the rush to burn, pp. 4-10; "The doctor, the die-hard and the politician" in *Earthlife Africa (Johannesburg) Update*, 1994, p. 1; "Toxics: hazardous waste incineration 2" in *Earthlife News* [Johannesburg], September 1992, p. 1; *Beeld (Kalender)*, 8.9.1992, p. 4. See also Earthlife Africa, "Holfontein 'HH' landfill", <<http://www.earthlife.org.za/campaigns/toxics/holf-intro.htm>>, 1997.

Italy, Brazil and the Middle East.<sup>99</sup> The first foreign mercury shipments arrived at its site in Cato Ridge in 1986.<sup>100</sup>

Problems at the Cato Ridge site were first discovered by government inspectors in 1988 and late in 1989 it became known that large quantities of mercury were leaking from the plant into the Umgeni River, which flows into the Inanda Dam, Durban's main water source. In February 1990 water and soil samples were taken from the surrounding area, and the tests conducted showed high levels of mercury poisoning, with one sample being over 100 times the recommended limit. Furthermore the mercury had an organic content of over 30%. In the USA recycling plants refuse to handle mercury with an organic content of over 3%, while the processing of wastes with an organic content of over 4% is illegal in terms of the regulations of the US Environmental Protection Agency.<sup>101</sup>

The event that triggered the campaign against Thor Chemicals was a report that two workers had "gone mad", because they were saying and doing strange things and were shaking a lot (typical symptoms of mercury poisoning). The issue was taken up locally by ELA, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU), the residents of Fredville (the affected area) and farmers from the Tala Valley, while Greenpeace mobilised support against Thor Chemicals in the USA. In April 1990 the company and its activities were brought to the attention of a wider audience when demonstrations were held at its site in Cato Ridge and in the USA at American Cyanamid plants. These demonstrations were important because it was the first time that ENGOs and trade unions in the country had united in an environmental campaign, and it was the first time that South African environmental interest groups

<sup>99</sup> Borden Chemical and Plastics (USA), Calgon Carbon Corporation (USA), American Cyanamid (USA), Margate (UK), Ausimont (Italy), Solvay do Brasil (Brazil), and Red Sea and Gulf (Middle East).

<sup>100</sup> Commission of Inquiry into Thor Chemicals, *Report of the first phase*, pp. 3-5.

<sup>101</sup> Earthlife Africa, "Thor Chemicals: chronology of the campaign against Thor Chemicals", <<http://www.earthlife.org.za/campaigns/toxic/thor.htm>>, 1997; M. Colvin, "Occupational hazards" in *Indicator South Africa* 9(1), Summer 1991, pp. 82-83; G. Coleman, "The campaign against Thor Chemicals: trade unions and the environment" in *Critical Health* 33, November 1990, pp. 69-70; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, p. 46.

combined forces with ENGOs and trade unions in another country (USA) to fight for a common goal.<sup>102</sup>

Amidst the public outcry that followed the campaign, the Department of Water Affairs ordered Thor Chemicals in April 1990 to suspend its operations for four weeks because of heavy rains. The company continued with its activities after the temporary suspension was lifted and even applied for the expansion of its operations, which application was granted by the government in February 1991. In March 1994, after four years of campaigns directed against their activities, Thor Chemicals announced that it would cease to import toxic waste and applied for a permit to incinerate 2 500 tons of stockpiled waste without recovering mercury. Their application was challenged by the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) and the CWIU, which led directly to the appointment of a commission of inquiry by the government in 1995. The commission dismissed the demands of the EJNF and the CWIU that the wastes be returned to their senders, and recommended that the company be allowed to incinerate its mercury stockpile.<sup>103</sup>

The granting of transit facilities in South African harbours also received attention with the *Maria Laura*, a vessel carrying eighteen tons of polychlorinated biphenyl from Australia to France, causing outrage among non-governmental role-players in the environmental movement.<sup>104</sup> The commencement of regular plutonium shipments (at a two month interval) between France and Japan in mid-1992 resulted in ELA joining forces with the Wildlife Society, the ANC and Eco-Programme to oppose the plutonium ships from entering South Africa's economically exclusive zone. The government reacted positively to the demands of the protest campaign and barred all ships carrying plutonium from entering the country's economically exclusive zone,

<sup>102</sup> R. Crompton and A. Erwin, "Reds and greens: labour and the environment" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 82-83; Coleman, pp. 71-74.

<sup>103</sup> Crompton and Erwin, p. 83; Commission of Inquiry into Thor Chemicals, pp. 9-26; Earthlife Africa, "Thor Chemicals..."; *Vrye Weekblad*, 14.2.1992, p. 4; *Vrye Weekblad*, 3.4.1992, p. 16; *The Daily News*, 21.2.1992, p. 3; *Beeld*, 15.6.1994, p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> J.I. Glazewski, "Regulating transboundary movement of hazardous waste: international developments and implications for South Africa" in *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 26(2), July 1993, p. 235.

while the Council for Nuclear Safety offered to provide emergency assistance, under certain conditions, to ships in danger.<sup>105</sup>

### 6.5.3 Industrial pollution

The polluting of river networks across the country by industrial effluent became a major environmental problem and issue between 1988 and 1992. One of the most publicised cases of industrial pollution was the chemical spill at Sappi's Ngodwana Paper Mill in 1989. A large spill of soap skimming, which contained smaller amounts of toxic sulphates, occurred at the Ngodwana mill in September 1989. This spill devastated the ecosystems of the Elands and Crocodile Rivers, and killed more than 22 fish species and other forms of animal life in a stretch of river downstream from the mill. The Lowveld Environment Action Foundation, formed by landowners in the area in response to the spill, and the Wildlife Society, took up the issue, and demanded an independent inquiry into the causes of the accident. Sappi was fined only R600 for the spill and the resulting damage.<sup>106</sup>

The Ngodwana spill was part of a general increase in water pollution due to industrial discharges that occurred from 1988 onwards. Other spills included the dumping of toxins in the Vaal River by the SASOL I plant at Sasolburg in 1988, the leaking of poisonous chemicals into the Selati River (which runs through the KNP) by a phosphate company in 1988, the regular polluting of the Olifants and Crocodile Rivers by toxic heavy metals, phosphate and nitrogen, and the caustic soda spill of the Atomic Energy Corporation into the Moganwe Spruit close to the Hartbeespoort Dam in 1991.<sup>107</sup> In their report on the situation of waste management and pollution control in South Africa, the CSIR found that 59.2% of all the hazardous waste in the country was discharged into water. Major stumbling blocks in the proper treatment of effluent

<sup>105</sup> See for example M. Johns, "Japan's plutonium economy" in *New Ground* 9, Spring 1992, pp. 12-14; *Die Burger*, 10.7.1992, p. 9; *Beeld*, 13.7.1992, p. 8; "The plutonium threat" in *Earthlife Africa* (Cape Town) Newsletter, July 1992, pp. 1-2; C. Albertyn, "Govt bars nuke cargo ship" in *Earthlife Africa* (Natal region) Newsletter, August 1992, p. 2; Greenpeace USA, *Stop plutonium* (pamphlet), pp. 2-8.

<sup>106</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 29.9.1989-5.10.1989, p. 5; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, p. 10.

<sup>107</sup> *The Weekly Mail*, 29.9.1989-5.10.1989, p. 5; "Pollution critical in SA as perennial rivers run dry" in *Chamber of Mines Journal* 33(4), April 1991, pp. 5, 11; *Business Day*, 21.11.1991, p. 5; M. van Eeden, "Besoedelde rivier wek kommer" in *Prisma* 6(3), April 1991, p. 36; H. Coetzee and D. Cooper, "Wasting water: squandering a precious resource" in Cock and Koch (eds), pp. 134-136.



before discharging it, were identified as a lack of technology and lack of proper enforcement of legislation.<sup>108</sup>

#### 6.5.4 Anti animal-cruelty

The highly controversial and emotive annual culling of the Cape fur seal population finally came to a head when Gert Kotzé announced the indefinite postponement of the culling of 30 000 seals at Kleinsee on 17 July 1990. Even though anti animal-cruelty ENGOs had campaigned for years against seal harvesting, credit for the postponement belonged to ELA, the Seal Action Group, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Save our Seals, and the Front for Animal Liberation and Conservation of Nature. Their highly emotional (and at times violent)<sup>109</sup> campaign led to the appointment of a committee to investigate the scientific aspects of sealing on 14 August 1990. Though the committee found no scientific reasons for the halting of the proposed harvesting, and further recommended the controlling of the Cape fur seal population at Kleinsee, the cabinet decided to temporarily suspend all commercial seal harvesting in South African waters in February 1991. The suspension was still in place in 1998.<sup>110</sup>

Vivisection also received the attention of anti animal-cruelty ENGOs in South Africa. It made headlines in the country for the first time in 1987 when the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) obtained a court order on 2 December 1987 against a series of experiments to be conducted on live animals at the Wits Medical School Animal Unit. The SPCA also asked for the removal of a certain cat, BC3, which was left with 50% burns and an induced peptic ulcer after a series of

<sup>108</sup> Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, *The situation of waste management and pollution control in South Africa: executive summary*, pp. 3, 6-9, 12; Environmental Monitoring Group, *Clean production*, pp. 16-18, 25-26.

<sup>109</sup> A member of ELA Johannesburg's subcommittee on sealing, Vivian van der Sandt, dumped a bag filled with dog testicles and red colorant in the offices of the Namibian tourist bureau in Johannesburg on 21 September 1990. Her protest action against the Namibian seal harvesting was deemed violent by ELA and she was subsequently expelled from the organisation. For more details see *The Star*, 22.9.1990, p. 1; *Beeld*, 25.9.1990, p. 6; *Vrye Weekblad*, 12.10.1990, p. 17; *Vrye Weekblad*, 2.10.1992, p. 4 (letters).

<sup>110</sup> *Beeld*, 5.7.1990, p. 2; *Beeld (Kalender)*, 24.7.1990, p. 5; *Beeld*, 28.7.1990, p. 9; *Report of the Subcommittee of the Sea Fisheries Advisory Committee appointed at the request of the Minister of Environment Affairs and of Water Affairs, to advise the minister on scientific aspects of sealing*, pp. 1-3; JGPDC, Habitat Council: Media statement by the Minister of Environment Affairs, Adv. Louis Pienaar, 14.2.1991, p. 1.

experiments. Largely due to the efforts of the SPCA, national guidelines for the use of animals in research, training and the testing of products were drawn up in 1989. The Wits Medical School Animal Unit once again became the object of attention when ENGOs such as ELA and South Africans for the Abolition of Vivisection held well-publicised demonstrations outside its premises in 1990. Anti animal-cruelty ENGOs further succeeded in their campaign against the planned giraffe braai (barbecue) in Lichtenburg in April 1991. Because of public pressure the organisers had to find a more acceptable animal for the event.<sup>111</sup>

### 6.5.5 Gill netting and marine conservation

An important development in marine conservation was the launching of a campaign against the use of gill nets by the Dolphin Action and Protection Group (DAPG) in 1989. On 9 August 1989, on the recommendation of the DAPG, the government passed regulations that banned the carrying and the use of gill nets in South Africa's economically exclusive zone, as well as on the landing of fish caught with such nets at South African harbours without a permit. These regulations reflected the growing international concern over the use of gill nets and the detrimental impact it had on marine resources. These concerns ultimately manifested in UN General Assembly resolutions passed in December 1989 that placed a moratorium on large-scale pelagic gill net fishing, a moratorium that came into effect in July 1992.<sup>112</sup>

Despite the legislation in place, Table Bay harbour was frequented by trawlers from the Republic of China (Taiwan)<sup>113</sup> in 1990 carrying gill nets on board and, in a combined effort, the DAPG and ELA set out to expose every illegal entry. In doing so they succeeded in embarrassing the South African government in general, and the Minister of Environment Affairs, Gert Kotzé, in particular. Kotzé stated on 22 January

<sup>111</sup> *The Green Pages 1991/1992*, pp. 6-10; "Abolish vivisection" in *Earthlife News* [Wits], 1990, p. 3; *Earthlife News* [Wits], 1991, p. 1; R. Muller, "Balans tussen diereregte en navorsingsnut gesoek" in *Insig*, October 1989, pp. 15-17; *Beeld*, 24.4.1990, p. 4; Ledger, pp. 242-243.

<sup>112</sup> Dolphin Action and Protection Group, *Stripmining the oceans: drift/gill netting* (pamphlet), pp. 1-4; Earthlife Africa, "Gill nets: fact sheet", <<http://www.earthlife.org.za/factsheets/fs-gillnets.htm>>, s.a.; Earthlife Africa, "Gill nets: chronological account", <<http://www.earthlife.org.za/campaigns/other/gillnets.htm>>, s.a.

<sup>113</sup> Taiwan was the only other nation licensed to catch tuna in South African territorial waters. Gill nets are mainly used for tuna. "SA calls for action on tuna gill nets" in *South African Shipping News and Fishing Industry Review* 44(6), December 1989, p. 55.

1990, after granting fifteen illegal entrees permits as a special favour to Taiwan, that no more permits would be issued in future. However, by 21 July 1990 a total of 123 permits had been issued by Kotzé's department. By publicising the bad enforcement of anti-gill netting legislation, the DAPG and ELA forced the government to clean up its act, and to start denying vessels which carried gill nets entrance into South African harbours.<sup>114</sup>

The DAPG and ELA also started co-operating in this regard with the militant Food and Allied Workers' Union (FAWU) from June 1990 onwards. The co-operation was established after revelations that at least four of FAWU's members working on a Taiwanese trawler, the *Chin Chia Ching*, had had some of their fingers amputated because of frostbite after working in the refrigeration hold of the vessel. Their combined campaign focused on both the illegal use of gill nets by Taiwanese trawlers licensed to catch tuna in South African territorial waters, and on the working conditions of the workers on board these trawlers. Nan Rice, the founder and secretary of the DAPG, subsequently became a consultant to FAWU and a working relationship was established between FAWU and the DAPG.<sup>115</sup>

### 6.5.6 Agrochemicals

Following the lawsuit brought against the manufacturers of hormone herbicides by vegetable farmers in the Tala Valley (see section 5.5.1), the widespread use of agrochemicals became a major issue for ENGOs such as ELA and the South African Rivers Association (SARA), and for the South African Chemical Workers Union whose members were involved in the production thereof. A major success between 1988 and 1992 concerned the spraying of cannabis plantations with the defoliant paraquat. ELA and the SARA succeeded in convincing the Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, to place a temporary ban on the use of paraquat in the government's fight against drugs on 11 December 1990.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Earthlife Africa, "Gill nets: chronological account"; *Dolphin Whale Watch RSA Newsletter* 8(1), February 1990, pp. 1, 5-7; *Beeld*, 6.7.1990, p. 4; *Beeld*, 19.9.1990, p. 10.

<sup>115</sup> Koch, p. 26; F. Manual and J.I. Glazewski, "The oceans: our common heritage" in Cock and Koch (eds), p. 209.

<sup>116</sup> See for example "The 'aggro' chemicals" in *Critical Health* 33, November 1990, pp. 76-86; Earthlife Africa (Natal region), *Living Earthlife...*, pp. 1-2; Stanford, pp. 23-25.

ELA also joined forces with the Tala Valley farmers and staged highly publicised protests in Durban against the use of hormone herbicides in 1991. The printed media was also used through the placement of advertisements in *The Daily News* in which diverse representative groupings expressed their concern over the use of herbicides. A direct result of this campaign was that the government ceased to make use of 2,4-D products and some chemical companies voluntarily stopped the manufacturing of 2,4-D.<sup>117</sup>

### 6.6 South Africa, the Earth Summit and the Earthlife Africa conference

Twenty years after the historic United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972), the world gathered again to discuss environmental issues at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, also known as the Earth Summit) was the biggest conference convened in history and brought together a diversity of interest groups to discuss and decide upon mechanisms to protect the global environment and to implement sustainable development. The main significance of UNCED and the processes that preceded it lies in the identification of sustainable development as the goal the whole world should work towards. This concept and its action plan, Agenda 21, subsequently became the model and barometer according to which states would be judged in the future (see section 2.7 for a discussion of UNCED).

South Africa contributed little to the UNCED process, not out of choice, but because of its non-participatory status at the UN. The government was not represented at any of the preparatory meetings leading up to UNCED, and thus made no contribution towards determining the content of the sustainable development action plan (Agenda 21) adopted at the conference. Official representation at the actual event was further denied, although the country was invited to attend the conference as an observer and to submit a report on development and environment in South Africa. In accordance with the invitations, the country submitted a report entitled *Building the foundation*

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<sup>117</sup> *Earthlife Africa (Natal region) Newsletter*, July 1991, p. 16.

for sustainable development in South Africa (which was incorporated into the *Nations of the earth report*), while a governmental delegation attended the proceedings as observers.<sup>118</sup>

The South African government's lack of status within the international political community was emphasised by the fact that both the ANC and PAC were invited to send delegates with observer status to the official proceedings. Both organisations were also given the opportunity to address the conference, with the ANC endorsing the main principles and guidelines of Agenda 21 in their paper, and the PAC presenting their energy policy. Other South African representatives included a delegation from the IEF, which participated in an event organised by the International Network for Environmental Management, and a representative from the South African ENGOs who was invited to join a regional delegation from Southern Africa. Arguably the most important representative of the country to UNCED was Elsie Mashinini, who was named to the United Nations Environment Programme's "Global 500 Roll of Honour" in 1992. Mashinini was one of only 74 individuals (by 1992) to have received this honour and it was awarded for her achievements in soil enrichment, trench-gardening and waste recycling in Ecolink's Earthcare programme.<sup>119</sup>

The limited participation by both the South African government and non-governmental role-players was unfortunate given the fact that UNCED determined not only the environmental agenda, but also the broad structure of future economic development. This situation impacted negatively on the formulation of a sustainable development policy that would best suit the country's needs. Lack of governmental understanding of the concept of sustainable development was further reflected in its national report to UNCED in which it failed to integrate environmental and developmental issues.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> R.P. Wynberg, *Exploring the Earth Summit. Findings of the Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: implications for South Africa* (M.Phil. dissertation), pp. 16-17; I. van der Merwe, "The summit of '92" in *Conserva* 7(5), September/October 1992, pp. 4-5; Department of Environment Affairs, *Building the foundation for sustainable development in South Africa. National report to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to be held in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992*.

<sup>119</sup> L. van Niekerk, "A woman of substance" in *Conserva* 7(3), May/June 1992, pp. 12-13; D. Cooper, "South Africa after UNCED?" in Hallows (ed.), pp. 33-34; Wynberg, pp. 16-17; D. Cooper, "After UNCED: NGOs must get their act together" in *New Ground* 9, Spring 1992, p. 49.

<sup>120</sup> Wynberg, pp. 16-17.

UNCED was followed in South Africa by an international conference on "what it means to be green in South Africa" hosted by Earthlife Africa from 14 to 18 September 1992. The Earthlife conference served as an important forum in determining future directions in the formulation and implementation of a sustainable development policy in the country. Broad issues addressed included dominant and appropriate technologies, the role of trade unions in environmental issues, rural land use, urbanisation and human settlements, consumption and population, and the relationship between growth and sustainable development.<sup>121</sup> The most important outcome of the conference was the passing of a resolution that called for the establishment of a national body to co-ordinate ENGO activities in South Africa. This decision eventually led to the founding of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum in November 1994, which became one of the most important role-players in the South African environmental movement from 1994 onwards.<sup>122</sup>

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Important changes occurred within the South African environmental movement between 1988 and 1992, which not only broadened the scope of its environmental agenda, but also changed the character of the movement. By establishing the environment as a political issue, ENGOs such as ELA, Eco-programme and CAP opened up South African environmentalism to anti-apartheid organisations, political parties and trade unions, which in turn added new dimensions to efforts to improve the South African environment. Within the political context of the time, the interaction between ENGOs and the aforementioned newcomers to the environmental scene contributed to environmental issues becoming topical, for the first time, to South African society.

Probably the biggest contribution made by ENGOs to the development of environmentalism in South Africa in this phase was the campaigns against hazardous

<sup>121</sup> See D. Hallows (ed.), *Hidden faces. Environment, development, justice: South Africa and the global context* for the proceedings of the conference. See also J. Prinsloo, "Earthlife Africa conference" in *Innovation* 5, December 1992, pp. 27-28; V. Munnik, "Global village politics...and what it means to be green in SA" in *New Ground* 10, Summer 1992/1993, pp. 32-34.

<sup>122</sup> "Conference resolutions" in Hallows (ed.), p. 323; Vollgraaff, p. 95.

waste disposal. These campaigns were important for they highlighted the dangers involved in the handling and disposing of hazardous waste at a time when the South African government was considering expanding the hazardous waste disposal industry in the country. It also highlighted the impact hazardous waste has on both the living and natural environment in the immediate vicinity of disposal sites and emphasised the need for strict governmental control over this industry. Other important contributions by the ENGO sector included the campaigns against the use of gill nets in South Africa's economically exclusive zone, vivisection and proposed developments in ecologically sensitive areas.

In comparison with the contributions made by the non-governmental sector, the government contributed relatively little to the South African environmental movement between 1988 and 1992, with its most important contribution being the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 73) in 1989. Apart from this piece of environmental legislation and the report of the President's Council on the management of environmental affairs in South Africa, the government constantly appeared weak and unprepared when faced with environmental crises throughout this phase. Against the background of the events of this phase (1988-1992), together with those of the other two phases (1972-1982 and 1982-1988), it is now possible to evaluate the history of environmentalism in South Africa between 1972 and 1992, and to compare this movement with global environmentalism in the same period.

## CHAPTER 7

### EVALUATION

The South African environmental movement has come a long way since Dr P.S. Rautenbach headed the South African delegation to the historic United Nations Conference of the Human Environment (UNCHE), held in Stockholm in June 1972. The twenty years in between UNCHE and the equally historic United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro, 1992) saw the development of South African environmentalism from a movement concerned mainly with the conservation of fauna, flora and natural resources in 1972 to one that, by 1992, preferred to focus on the environmental impact of human activities. Developments in the environmental field were not unique to South Africa and the activities in the country reflected developments and changes within the global environmental movement. As such, it is important to compare South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992 with the global environmental movement in the same period.

According to the political scientist John McCormick, the development of global environmentalism (from UNCHE in 1972 onwards) has led to three significant changes in human values. Firstly, it prompted a rediscovery of humankind's total dependence on a healthy natural environment. Secondly, it has led to a re-evaluation of the dominant role technology played in nineteenth and twentieth century societies,<sup>1</sup> which brought about a shift away from an emphasis on material values and physical security towards a greater concern for the quality of life in general. Thirdly, global environmentalism challenged the orthodox models of growth (both capitalist and socialist) and forced the world at large to reconsider the priorities and principles of growth.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the United Nations (UN) and the majority of the independent

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<sup>1</sup> Within the reformational philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd the dominant role technology has played since the Renaissance is seen as part of the prevailing humanistic ground motive of nature and freedom. This ground motive has two poles, namely the establishment of an autonomous human personality (freedom), and the control and domination of nature by means of technology (nature). Dooyeweerd identified the humanistic ground motive as the dominant ground motive in Western thought since the Renaissance. See H. Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western culture: pagan, secular, and Christian options* for more details on the humanistic and other ground motives in Western thought throughout history.

<sup>2</sup> J. McCormick, *The global environmental movement: reclaiming paradise*, p. 195.



states officially endorsed sustainable development as the new economic and environmental model for the future at UNCED in 1992.

The same cannot be said about South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992. An holistic view of the natural environment and humankind's corresponding total dependence on the health thereof, never fully gained ground in South Africa in the twenty years between UNCHE and UNCED. This was mainly due to the fact that, despite radical changes in the broad environmental agenda between 1988 and 1992, the emphasis in South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992 fell predominantly on the conservation of fauna and flora. This in turn meant that environmental considerations focused on the conservation of particular areas and species, which were fenced in to ensure the continuation of their existence. These protected areas became symbols of responsible stewardship of the natural environment for the South African government, the National Parks Board, the provincial nature conservancies, a number of environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) and a large segment of the white people in the country. However, the management of these areas as separate entities that allowed little interference from outside, ensured that conservation measures remained divorced from the everyday life of the public in general. It was thus very difficult, and almost impossible, to establish an environmental perspective in which humans were seen as being totally dependent on a healthy natural environment in South Africa.

The traditional view of technology with its unlimited powers to solve all possible problems, including environmental problems, prevailed in South Africa between 1972 and 1992. This continuation of the traditional view of technology was a direct result of the sanctions imposed by the UN, specialist agencies and some independent states, on technology transfer to South Africa since the 1970s. Within the context of the recession in the South African economy from the 1973 oil crisis onwards, coupled with the economic sanctions imposed on the country because of the government's domestic policy of apartheid, the development of technology became a key component of the government's efforts to devise strategies to ensure the survival and development of the South African economy.

The international political and economical isolation of South Africa impacted negatively on the South African economy. Within this context, the capitalist priorities and principles of growth remained intact with the government opting to pursue an economic policy that allowed for unlimited development of the economy. The absence of highly politicised ENGOs willing to criticise and oppose the government in any possible way, within the South African environmental movement until the founding of Earthlife Africa (ELA) in 1988, meant that this unlimited development policy of the government, with few exceptions, went by largely unchecked for most of the twenty years between UNCHE and UNCED.

The main reason why South African environmentalism did not produce the same results (i.e. the changes in human values identified by McCormick) as the global environmental movement between 1972 and 1992, can be directly ascribed to the political isolation of South Africa. This political isolation and the corresponding exclusion of the country from the UN General Assembly, some UN specialist agencies (notably the United Nations Environment Programme) and international organisations (e.g. the International Atomic Energy Agency), impacted negatively on South Africa's involvement in the global environmental movement. With only limited participation allowed in global environmentalism, South Africa therefore had limited opportunities to interact with and learn from the major role-players which set the trends internationally and from whom the major shifts in global environmentalism emanated.

A direct result of South Africa's limited participation in global environmentalism was that the South African environmental movement, especially the governmental sector, did not stay in touch with important changes that occurred both on an international level, and within national environmental movements in other countries. On an international level, the government's inability to identify major paradigm shifts in the management of the natural environment became evident when it started to promote the aims of the World Conservation Strategy (WCS, 1980) in 1987. By that time, however, the WCS had become outdated and had been replaced by the influential Brundtland report, *Our common future* (1987), as the most important document on the natural environment and the management thereof.

The South African government thus opted for an environmental strategy (the WCS) in 1987 that was outdated, while the rest of the world, in response to *Our common future*, began to take the first tentative steps towards preparing for the implementation of sustainable development policies. Had *Our common future* been just another report on the environment and a blueprint for the survival of humankind, it would not have mattered whether or not the South African government endorsed it. However, it became *the* statement on what constitutes the proper management of the natural environment. It also laid the foundations of the policy of sustainable development that the UN and the majority of independent states officially endorsed at UNCED in 1992 as the economic and environmental model that would ensure humankind a viable future on planet earth. By neglecting to address this paradigm shift within global environmentalism from the late 1980s onwards, the South African government ensured that the South African environmental movement continued to lag behind its counterparts across the globe.

The South African government is not solely at fault for neglecting to redirect South African environmentalism towards sustainable development. In the years 1972 to 1992, the world at large focused almost exclusively on the domestic policy of apartheid and on South Africa's control (until 1990) over Namibia, thereby neglecting also to check up on the environmental performance of the South African government. Though politically isolated, the country nonetheless did participate in a number of international environmental conventions between 1972 and 1992. The majority of the conventions to which South Africa became party were conservation orientated (e.g. the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora of 1973 and the Convention of Antarctic Marine Living Resources of 1980), while the government proved less willing to enter into conventions that could possibly place restrictions on the economic development of the country. For example, it took the South African government five years before acceding to both the Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (Vienna, 1985) in 1990 and to the Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel, 1989) in 1994.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See P.G.W. Henderson, *Environmental laws of South Africa* 2, Appendix 3 for a complete list of international environmental conventions to which South Africa is party.

South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992 compares unfavourably with other national environmental movements, notably those in Northern America and Western Europe. When compared to the national environmental movement in the United States of America (USA), for example, the evidence points towards South African environmentalism being as many as twenty years behind that of its American counterpart. Consider the following: the USA promulgated its first broad-ranging and all-embracing environmental act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), on 1 January 1970 during the presidential term of Richard Nixon. One of the major components of the NEPA was that it required all proposed federal developments to carry out an environmental impact assessment (EIA) before being allowed to proceed. The closest South African environmental legislation came to the NEPA was the Environment Conservation Act (no 73) that was promulgated in 1989. This act replaced its predecessor, the Environment Conservation Act (no 100 of 1980), and was the first step that the government took to provide for the protection and controlled utilisation of the environment in legislation. EIAs, however, remained voluntary within the provisions of this act.

The US government also responded to the public concern over high pollution levels (one of the major concerns of the environmental revolution) by creating the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 1970. The EPA was (and still is) an independent pollution control agency responsible for the regulation and enforcement of all federal legislation on air and water pollution, environmental radiation, agrochemicals and waste disposal. No similar regulatory agency was established within governmental structures in South Africa between 1972 and 1992. The South African government opted for a fragmented approach in the official administration of environmental affairs, which in turn meant that pollution control measures were enforced by a diversity of different role-players within governmental structures. More than eight state departments, the four provincial administrations and all the municipalities were directly involved in the control of the various types of pollution in South Africa. Lack of central control over pollution measures contributed directly to slack enforcement of related legislation, which in turn contributed to the poor image of the government and the Department of Environment Affairs with new environmentalist ENGOs such as ELA and Consumers Against Pollution (CAP).

The ENGO sector of the South African environmental movement also lagged behind its American counterpart. One of the salient features of the environmental revolution of the 1960s was the founding of highly politicised ENGOs with broad-ranging environmental agendas, such as Friends of the Earth (FoE, 1969) and Greenpeace (1971). By the late 1970s the Environmental Justice Movement added a new dimension to the ENGO sector in the USA and opened this sector up to people of colour and working class communities for the first time. The founding of Earth First! in 1980, on the other hand, provided radical, deep green environmentalists with a voice among the plethora of mainstream ENGOs active in the USA.

In South Africa, the first ENGO to adopt a broad environmental agenda was the Society for the Protection of the Environment (SPE, 1970). However, the SPE did not have a political agenda and therefore did not favour addressing environmental issues as political issues. This perspective in which the environment was an apolitical issue was a common characteristic among South African ENGOs until the founding of ELA in 1988. After 1988 the activities of ELA and like-minded ENGOs such as CAP (1989) and Eco-programme (1991) ensured that environmental issues became part of the broad anti-apartheid agenda and thus also a political issue.

Despite the fact that attention was paid to a limited extent to the health of the living environment of some communities (e.g. the Mafefe district), a movement similar to the Environmental Justice Movement in the USA never fully gained ground in South Africa between 1972 and 1992. This was mainly due to the political and economical marginalisation of people of colour in South Africa, which made the human need to live in a safe and healthy environment a luxury few could afford. No ENGO similar to Earth First! emerged in South Africa between 1972 and 1992, possibly because a large segment of the more radically-inclined citizens of the country were involved in the activities of anti-apartheid organisations.

Even though the pace at which South African environmentalism developed between 1972 and 1992 was much slower than that of its American counterpart, important developments nevertheless took place in the three identified phases within the history of the South African environmental movement between UNCHE and UNCED. In the

first phase, which lasted from 1972 to 1982, the main focus of South African environmentalism was on the institutionalisation of environmental affairs within government structures. For non-governmental role-players such as the United Party and the Wildlife Society, the "creation" of the Department of Planning and the Environment in 1973 was a big achievement because it signalled to them that the South African government was finally prepared to address the widespread environmental degradation in the country. This was followed in 1973 by the amendment of the Physical Planning and Utilisation of Resources Act (no 88 of 1967) and its renaming as the Environment Planning Act (no 73 of 1975). The latter act, however, remained focused on physical planning and did not satisfy the non-governmental sector's demand for a comprehensive environmental policy statement by the government. After many years of campaigning by ENGOS, the government partially realised their (the ENGOS') demand for an environmental policy statement with the publication of the White Paper on a National Policy Regarding Environmental Conservation in 1980. The White Paper was followed by the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 100) in 1982, which was the first general environmental legislation adopted by the South African government.

In many respects the South African government took nine years to accomplish what other governments had in less than one year, namely the establishment of a department of the environment, the publication of a comprehensive environmental policy statement and the promulgation of a comprehensive, all-embracing environmental act. (It is important to note that the Environment Conservation Act of 1982 was in no way all-embracing, and was but a step in the direction of greater legislative protection for the environment which followed in 1989.) This relatively long period that it took the government to institutionalise environmental affairs can be ascribed to two factors. Firstly, the environment and the management thereof were not on the government's list of top priorities. The government was too busy paying attention to political events both within and without the borders of South Africa to pay heed to the growing environmental crisis in the country.

Secondly, the absence of politicised ENGOS in South Africa between 1972 and 1982 meant that there was relatively little pressure on the government to make radical changes in the way it managed the natural environment. Conservationist John Pringle

aply describes the Wildlife Society's reaction to this slow development pace as one in which the members of this ENGO were caught up in the euphoria created by the phenomenal growth in public interest in the environment in general, and the Wildlife Society in particular, and by the government displaying greater sensitivity towards the natural environment than before. Amidst these feelings, the Wildlife Society was slow to catch on to the fact that the government was moving as slowly as it possibly could and that many of the environment-related changes made by the government amounted to nothing more than surface changes that had very little impact (e.g. the "creation" of the Department of Planning and the Environment).<sup>4</sup> Though Pringle was referring only to the Wildlife Society, the same arguments are valid for the other ENGOs active in South Africa between 1972 and 1982.

Don Caldwell identified another contributing factor to this state of affairs. According to Caldwell, governments pose as the defenders of the environment, but they are often its worst enemies.<sup>5</sup> The ENGO sector in South Africa, despite the exposing of some of the government's environmental abuses by *The Star's* Cleaner Air, Rivers and Environment (CARE) campaign, was slow to identify the South African government as a major cause of environmental degradation in the country. Instead, ENGOs preferred to view the role played by the government in environmental matters in a positive light that demanded their support rather than their criticism. This view of the government as an institution that exercised responsible stewardship towards the natural environment prevailed until the government's involvement in the illicit trade in ivory and rhinoceros horn first became public in 1988.

Despite the fact that ENGOs in general preferred to co-operate with the South African government, some ENGOs did prove willing to oppose governmental decisions that threatened environmental interests. The public outcry that followed the proposals to build a highway through the Garden Route and to mine coking coal in the Kruger National Park, signalled that South African ENGOs were both capable of and willing to perform the role of watchdogs where the government was concerned. However, between 1972 and 1982, opposition was mainly confined to conservation issues and

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<sup>4</sup> J.A. Pringle, *The conservationists and the killers: the story of game protection and the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa*, pp. 277-278.

<sup>5</sup> D. Caldwell, *No more martyrs now: capitalism, democracy, and ordinary people*, pp. 120-121.

NGOs thereby neglected to check up on governmental activities which fell outside the domain of a traditional conservation agenda such as pollution control and the environmental toll of apartheid.

While the South African environmental movement sought the institutionalisation of environmental affairs between 1972 and 1982, the next phase (1982-1988) in the history of South African environmentalism focused on ways to improve upon those environmental initiatives taken in the preceding decade. A very important development between 1982 and 1988 in the official administration of the environment was the changes made to the structure of the Department of Environment Affairs in 1984 and 1985. These structural changes (e.g. the Directorate of Water Affairs becoming a separate state department in 1984) enabled the Department to start developing its own unique identity for the first time. This process was far from complete by 1988 and the Department of Environment Affairs was by that time still neither a strong nor an important department within governmental structures.

While the Department of Environment Affairs was trying to establish itself, the statutory Council for the Environment emerged as the central role-player within the governmental sector of the South African environmental movement between 1982 and 1988. The Council was able to dominate governmental activities for two reasons: firstly, it consisted of members with proven expertise in environmental matters (unlike the staff of the Department of Environment Affairs) who were able to debate and act upon the complicated environmental issues of which the Department of Environment Affairs had little knowledge. Secondly, the majority of the Council's members had close ties with non-governmental role-players and were thus more informed about the environmental needs and aspirations of all the interested parties in the South African environmental movement than the Department of Environment Affairs was able to be.

Important new role-players emerged within the non-governmental sector of environmentalism in South Africa between 1982 and 1988. Of particular importance was the founding of community-based NGOs that catered for the environmental needs of some black and coloured communities (e.g. Abalimi Bezekhaya and Ecolink) and the publication of research material on air pollution in the Eastern Transvaal



Highveld. Probably the single most important contribution made by an ENGO to the environmental movement in this phase was the launching of the Purros project by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT). The Purros project, which involved the development of mechanisms to ensure the participation of the whole community in wildlife conservation, can be seen as a turning point in the management of protected areas in South Africa. This project challenged two prevailing beliefs within conservation circles, namely that people (especially black people) were the enemies of conservation, and that communities should make room (normally through forced relocation) for protected areas. The Purros project directly contributed to the development of a new conservation ethos that allowed for the direct participation of neighbouring communities in protected areas, thereby reversing the practice of alienating neighbouring communities from their traditional land and natural resources.

The founding of ELA in August 1988 marked the beginning of radical changes within the South African environmental movement and the start of the third phase in the history of South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992. In this phase (1988-1992) the South African government became the central body against which non-governmental environmental campaigns were directed, with the new environmentalists eager to publicise all possible environmental abuses of the government. The environment truly became a political issue for a time when new environmentalist ENGOs such as ELA and CAP succeeded in establishing the link between apartheid and the widespread environmental degradation in South Africa.

The placing of the environment on the broad anti-apartheid agenda had both positive and negative outcomes. Positive in that the non-governmental sector of South African environmentalism became an attractive option and a new frontier for anti-apartheid activists to continue their struggle against the South African government, while at the same time contributing towards efforts to improve the South African environment. These activists injected new energy into ENGOs while further providing them with new leadership and campaigning skills. The negative outcome relates to the anti-apartheid agenda being used as the political base for environmental issues. As long as apartheid remained intact it was easy for new environmentalist ENGOs to draw support from the anti-apartheid movement. However, when apartheid officially came to an end and the long sought-after goal of majority rule was realised with the 1994

general election, the political base upon which many ENGOs operated ceased to exist, while many anti-apartheid activists simply lost interest in the environmental cause.

Between 1988 and 1992 the scope of the environmental agenda in South Africa broadened considerably and came to include, *inter alia*, concerns about toxic and hazardous waste disposal, ozone depletion, hazardous waste transfers, industrial water and air pollution, anti animal-cruelty and the use of gill nets. Though this phase also saw the rise of green politics in the country, green political parties never made an impact on South African society. Within the political context of the time, supporting a party that operated solely on green political principles was an option that few citizens of the country perceived as viable.

Despite the new environmentalists claiming otherwise, the government did make important contributions to the South African environmental movement between 1988 and 1992. These contributions were confined to the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 73) in 1989 and the publication of the report of the President's Council on environmental management in South Africa. The Environment Conservation Act was important because it was the first piece of environmental legislation that provided for the effective protection and the controlled utilisation of the South African environment. However, the success of the implementation of this act was dependent on the Minister of Environment Affairs making use of the wide discretionary powers assigned to him within the provisions of the act. Unfortunately none of the Ministers of Environment Affairs made use of these powers between 1988 and 1992, which in effect rendered its groundbreaking provisions useless. The importance of the report of the President's Council, on the other hand, lies in the fact that it was the first acknowledgement within governmental circles that the official administration of environmental affairs in South Africa was inadequate. However, most of the far-reaching changes proposed by this report were never attended to as it was published at a time when the government and the other political role-players in the country was preparing to negotiate a democratic future for South Africa.

After twenty years of activism, policy developments, structural and legislative changes, between UNCHE in 1972 and UNCED in 1992, the South African environmental movement had produced a mixed record of successes and failures. The

main failures of South African environmentalism in this period include, *inter alia*, its inability to curb high air pollution levels in the country, with air pollution levels in some areas (e.g. the Eastern Transvaal Highveld) and some black townships (e.g. Soweto) being comparable to some of the world's most polluted areas by 1992; it failed to address the high demographic growth in South Africa (the South African population increased sharply from 21,8 million in 1970 to 38,1 million in 1990);<sup>6</sup> it failed to bring an end to uncontrolled developments, especially along the coastline and on the Cape Peninsula; it failed to address the environmental degradation in the so-called homelands; ENGOs failed to pressure the government to plan for the urbanisation of black people (60% of the total South African population were urbanised by 1990),<sup>7</sup> which in turn contributed to black townships becoming health hazards for the people who lived there, and, with few exceptions, South African environmentalism failed to address the environmental needs of people of colour in the country.

The failures of the South African environmental movement between 1972 and 1992 can be ascribed to several factors: firstly, the environment, given the political context of the period, was never a top priority for the South African government; secondly, the government opted for a fragmented approach in the official administration of environmental affairs, which in turn impacted negatively on the establishment of a strong, centralised Department of Environment Affairs; thirdly, despite the fact that adequate environmental legislation was adopted as far back as 1965 (e.g. the Atmospheric Pollution Prevention Act no 45 of 1965), the government proved itself unable to successfully enforce the legislation in place; fourthly, despite the fact that South Africa had many ENGOs, the majority of these organisation were ineffective and divided by dissension,<sup>8</sup> and fifthly, the non-governmental sector of the environmental movement, with few exceptions, was confined mainly to white people who tended to articulate the environmental needs of white people and not those of all the ethnic groups in South Africa.

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<sup>6</sup> J.M. Calitz, *Southern African population: a regional profile, 1970-1990*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> South Africa Foundation, *South Africa 1993*, p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> This shortcoming in the ENGO sector was already evident by 1980. See Pringle, p. 277 for more details.

On the other hand, the successes of South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992 include, *inter alia*, the change in the dominant conservation ethos brought about by the Purros project that would henceforth allow greater participation in protected areas by neighbouring communities; the acceptance that South Africa indeed had an air pollution problem with the publication of research findings on air pollution in the Eastern Transvaal Highveld in 1988 (the government had denied the existence of an air pollution problem since the 1960s); the attention paid to the asbestos polluted community in the Mafefe district in the 1980s which prompted the government to force the asbestos industry to clean up its operation; the promulgation of the Environment Conservation Act (no 73) in 1989 that, for the first time, enabled the Minister of Environment Affairs to start making a positive contribution towards improving the South African environment if he or she opted to do so, and the campaigns against toxic and hazardous waste disposal by ELA that prompted the government to commission investigations into toxic and hazardous waste disposal in South Africa for the first time.

These successes of the South African environmental movement between 1972 and 1992 can be directly ascribed to the activities of non-governmental role-players, namely the ENGOs and to a lesser extent the academic community and environmental journalists. These role-players responded to what they perceived to be an environmental crisis or to be shortcomings in the administration of environmental affairs and/or in environmental legislation, and through their activities forced the government to act upon their requests. Without this pressure from the non-governmental role-players in South African environmentalism, given the political situation in South Africa and the Southern Africa region, and the isolation of the country in the international political arena between 1972 and 1992, it is doubtful if the government would have responded to the extent it did in the period between UNCHE and UNCED.

The opening paragraph of the Preface quoted *The Star's* editor, John Jordi, writing in 1971, who felt that the harnessing of the natural environment in South Africa had been too successful. He wrote that the result of this harnessing process was the fact that the natural environment had "capitulated leaving behind poisoned, lifeless

streams; exhausted infertile soil".<sup>9</sup> South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992 took the first tentative steps towards reversing this process. However, by 1992, the South African environmental movement was still a long way from realising the reformational philosophy's demand that humans should truly care for and preserve the natural environment. Until such time, the South African environment will continue to have Jordi's poisoned, lifeless streams and exhausted infertile soil.

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<sup>9</sup> *The Star*, 10.3.1971, p. 22.

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## SUMMARY

The latter half of the twentieth century has seen an unprecedented growth in humankind's concern for the natural environment and its finite capability to absorb unchecked industrial and demographic growth. This concern was first and foremost a global phenomenon and led directly to the emergence of global environmentalism from the late 1960s onwards. A key component in the history of the global environmental movement was the initiatives taken by the United Nations (UN) aimed at getting the governments of the world involved in and committed to strategies to remedy widespread environmental degradation. To achieve this goal the UN convened what turned out to be the two watershed events in global environmentalism, namely the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm in 1972 and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The purpose of this study is to provide an account of the history of the environmental movement in South Africa and the country's participation in the global environmental movement between UNCHE in 1972 and UNCED in 1992.

South Africa's position in the global environmental movement between 1972 and 1992 was dubious at best. Due to the government's domestic policy of apartheid, South Africa was isolated in the international political arena, which impacted negatively on the country's involvement in global environmentalism. With only limited participation allowed in global environmentalism, the South African environmental movement did not stay in touch with the important changes that occurred on an international level in that it failed to identify and address the paradigm shift towards sustainable development from 1987 onwards. Although isolated, South Africa did participate in some aspects of the global environmental movement, notably those that involved the conservation of fauna and flora, while the government proved less willing to participate in global initiatives which could possibly place restrictions on the economic development of the country.

South African environmentalism developed differently from its counterparts in other countries between 1972 and 1992, owing to the limited participation of both governmental and non-governmental role-players in the global environmental

movement, and because of the political situation within South Africa in the same period. Although the government and the environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) responded to some aspects of the new environmental agenda that emerged alongside global environmentalism in the late 1960s, South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1988 remained largely focused on the conservation of fauna and flora. Important new trends in the official administration of environmental affairs were addressed with the creation of a state department for environmental affairs and the adoption of general environmental legislation. However, in contrast to national movements elsewhere in the world, the South African environmental movement between 1972 and 1988 was characterised by its apolitical nature.

The environment only became a political issue in South Africa from 1988 onwards with the founding of Earthlife Africa and like-minded ENGOS which linked the widespread environmental degradation in South Africa with the government's domestic policy of apartheid. Through their activities the new environmentalist ENGOS broadened the scope of the environmental agenda of South African environmentalism and opened the movement up to new role-players such as anti-apartheid organisations, political parties and labour unions. However, despite these new developments between 1988 and 1992, by 1992 the South African environmental movement was still a long way from reversing the detrimental human impact on the natural environment. The developments in South African environmentalism between 1972 and 1992 were therefore but the first tentative steps towards improving the South African environment.

## OPSOMMING

Gedurende die tweede helfte van die twintigste eeu het die mensdom se besorgdheid ongeëwenaard toegeneem ten opsigte van die bewaring van die natuur en laasgenoemde se beperkte vermoë om ongekontroleerde industriële en demografiese groei te absorbeer. Hierdie besorgdheid was by uitstek 'n internasionale verskynsel en het vanaf die laat sestigerjare direk tot die opkoms van internasionale *environmentalism* ('n term waarvoor tot op hede nog geen aanvaarbare Afrikaanse vertaling ontwikkel is nie) aanleiding gegee. Die inisiatiewe wat deur die Verenigde Nasies (VN) geneem is om regerings wêreldwyd te betrek en te verbind tot strategieë om die wydverspreide omgewingsagteruitgang te stuit, maak 'n kernkomponent van die geskiedenis van die internasionale omgewingsbeweging uit. Ten einde hierdie doelwitte te bereik, het die VN twee konferensies belê, wat as waterskeidings vir internasionale *environmentalism* beskou kan word. Die United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) het in 1972 in Stockholm plaasgevind en die United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) is in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro gehou. Met hierdie studie is ten doel gestel om die gekiedenis van die omgewingsbeweging in Suid-Afrika en dié land se deelname aan die internasionale omgewingsbeweging weer te gee, en wel vanaf 1972 (UNCHE) tot 1992 (UNCED).

Tussen 1972 en 1992 was Suid-Afrika se posisie in die internasionale omgewingsbeweging twyfelagtig. Die land was as gevolg van sy regering se binnelandse beleid van apartheid geïsoleerd binne die internasionale politieke arena. Hierdie isolasie het negatief ingewerk op die land se betrokkenheid by internasionale *environmentalism* en die Suid-Afrikaanse omgewingsbeweging het nie in voeling gebly met die belangrike veranderinge wat op internasionale gebied plaasgevind het nie, sodat dit misluk het om vanaf 1987 die paradigmaterskuiwing na volhoubare ontwikkeling te identifiseer en aan te spreek. Ten spyte van sy isolasie het Suid-Afrika wel aan sekere aspekte van die internasionale omgewingsbeweging deelgeneem - veral dié wat betrekking gehad het op die bewaring van fauna en flora. Die regering was daarteenoor minder gewillig om deel te neem aan internasionale inisiatiewe wat die moontlikheid kon inhou om beperkings op die ekonomiese ontwikkeling van Suid-Afrika te plaas.

Suid-Afrikaanse *environmentalism* het tussen 1972 en 1992 verskillend van ekwivalente in ander lande ontwikkel as gevolg van die beperkte deelname van beide die regering en nieregerings-rolspeleers in die internasionale omgewingsbeweging, asook as gevolg van die heersende politieke situasie in Suid-Afrika tydens hierdie periode. Alhoewel die regering én nieregerings-omgewingsorganisasies op sekere aspekte van die nuwe omgewingsagenda wat in die laat sestigerjare tesame met internasionale *environmentalism* opgekom het, gereageer het, het Suid-Afrikaanse *environmentalism* tussen 1972 en 1988 hoofsaaklik op die bewaring van fauna en flora gefokus gebly. Belangrike nuwe tendense in die amptelike administrasie van omgewingsake is aangespreek deur die skepping van 'n staatsdepartement vir omgewingsake, asook die goedkeuring van algemene omgewingswetgewing. In teenstelling met nasionale bewegings elders in die wêreld, was die Suid-Afrikaanse omgewingsbeweging tussen 1972 en 1988 a-polities van aard.

Die omgewing het eers vanaf 1988 'n politieke vraagstuk in Suid-Afrika geword met die stigting van Earthlife Africa en soortgelyke nieregerings-omgewingsorganisasies, wat die wydverspreide omgewingsagteruitgang in Suid-Afrika aan die regering se binnelandse beleid van apartheid gekoppel het. Deur hul aktiwiteite het die nuwe *environmentalist* nieregerings-omgewingsorganisasies die veld wat die omgewingsagenda in Suid-Afrika gedek het, verbreed. Die beweging is ook oopgestel aan nuwe rolspelers, soos anti-apartheidsorganisasies, politieke partye en vakbonde. Ten spyte van hierdie nuwe verwikkelinge tussen 1988 en 1992, was die Suid-Afrikaanse omgewingsbeweging teen 1992 steeds ver daarvandaan om die nadelige menslike impak op die natuurlike omgewing te neutraliseer. Die ontwikkelinge in Suid-Afrikaanse *environmentalism* tussen die jare 1972 en 1992 was dus slegs die eerste, tentatiewe stappe wat geneem is ten einde die Suid-Afrikaanse omgewing te verbeter.