



DEA Deputy Minister Barbara Thompson (wearing purple outfit) standing behind learners of Mokale Primary School who emerged victory in the Land Care competition.

World Environment and Desertification days commemorated

By Matsobane Manaka

Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in partnership with Limpopo Departments of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism and Agriculture and Rural Development commemorated the annual World Environmental Day and World Day to combat Desertification at Schoornord, Makhuduthamaga Municipality in Sekhukhune District on 15 June 2017.

"Although these international days are celebrated in different days, we have decided to have a joint celebrations because these celebrations are complimentary in many respects. Both have as their core objectives to raise people's awareness of the impact they have on the environment and the need for collective action that can have a positive effect on our environment," said DEA Deputy Minister Barbara Thompson in her keynote address.

Thompson elaborated the importance of observing both days in terms of the beauty they provide and the protection they deserve.

"The environmental day is globally observed on the 5th of June every year to promote awareness on the importance of preserving our environment and the need to identify problems that are related to the environment. The day is therefore meant to mobilise people across the world to tackle the environmental challenges that include climate change, global warming, air quality, eco-system management, deforestation, bio-diversity and illegal poaching of wild life.

"Similarly, World Day to combat desertification which is celebrated on the 17th of June every year is observed to promote public awareness on the effect of drought and desertification. Both these important days have grown into globally celebrated days for positive action to protect the environment." Referring to biodiversity, Thompson said South Africa is ranked the third most biodiversity in the world following Brazil and Indonesia. "This means we have a greater variety of animals and plants living both on land and in the ocean. So we need to create a condition to broaden the access of this biodiversity economy. We need to make it more inclusive for those who historically denied for participation in the economic spin-offs in the biodiversity economy".

Referring to medicinal vegetation viewed earlier at Loolo Mountain, where the event was unfolded, Thompson said the community should ensure the vegetation did not land in the shelves of the chemists bearing a foreign ownership. "The theme of this year's World Environmental Day is 'Connecting people to nature'. This reinforces the significances of our natural environment and the important role nature plays in our lives regardless of where we live. In the same way, the theme for World Day to combat Desertification is 'Our Land, Our home, Our future'. It underlines essential role productive land can play in turning the growing tide of communities abandoning their unproductive land which is communities that are stable, secure and sustainable," said Thompson.

"Our natural resources are free-given assets from God. They need to be handled with care, in so doing they shall continue to provide us with food, water, and energy to support our well-being. However, if we sustainably manage our land, we will reduce the impact of climate change and reduce the potential for disaster. Our success in this regard will depend on our ability to avoid land degradation, and restoration of graded land to its natural ability," she mentioned.

School bags, R10 000, R15 000 and R25 000 were awarded to Modiketse, Mampuru and Mokale Primary Schools respectively out of 13 schools involved in the LandCare Programme. Learners representing their schools had competed on the topic, "The impact of desertification, land degradation, drought on our livelihood and the impact of human activities on natural resources." in less than ten minutes.