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Road to Durban and beyond

At the end of November 2011 all eyes will be on Durban, and more specifically, the 17th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

DUBBED BY SOME AS THE “World Cup of Climate”, this international gathering of all those concerned with the challenges posed by climate change seeks to carve a road for climate negotiations beyond the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, which comes to an end in 2012.

The slogan for the Durban conference is *Working together! Saving tomorrow today!* To be sure, the impact of global change on our climate will not be managed or mitigated by any single stakeholder. It requires a society that is aware of the implications of its actions for the way we live; it requires business and industry to implement astute and sustainable working methodologies; and it requires political will – informed by credible and rigorous research.

The CSIR undertakes directed research and development for socio-economic growth. In line with our mandate, the CSIR is committed to national priorities, including:

- Economic growth and the creation of sustainable livelihoods
- Improved economic and social infrastructure
- A rural development strategy linked to land and agrarian reform and food security
- A strengthened skills and human resource base

- An improved health profile for all South Africans
- Cohesive, caring and sustainable communities
- African advancement and enhanced international co-operation
- Sustainable resource management and use.

Against this backdrop, our work in global and climate change cuts across several sectors and includes natural resources, built environment, industry, and green technologies and energy. The natural environment is both an important source of economic opportunity – agriculture, forestry, fisheries, ecotourism – and an irreplaceable habitat for humans and other species. CSIR research in this domain embraces both of these aspects, and the critical tradeoffs between them.

It is about the environment that we live in and use, rather than exclusively about undisturbed nature. Our research aims to develop innovative research and development platforms to provide strategically focused environmental solutions in support of a resilient economy.

The CSIR has a cadre of more than 30 researchers working exclusively in the field of climate change; many of them are respected internationally. This is especially significant as our

continent will be one of the worst impacted by climate change; in fact, the results of a changing climate on Africa are already being documented.

In this ScienceScope, we focus on science and technology that contribute to a better understanding of our changing planet. The CSIR's work in this area comprises atmospheric modelling, oceanic and terrestrial measurements and observing our climate from outer space.

However, a better understanding must translate into actions. These are described in the second part of the publication. Since substantial climate change is already underway, and more is inevitable, some actions involve adapting society, businesses and agriculture to a changing climate. Other actions are essential to keep the amount of climate change we will face in future within the adaptable range. This is why the negotiations at COP 17 are crucial.

I trust that you will enjoy this edition of the ScienceScope – strengthening southern Africa's response to global change through research and technology.

Dr Sibusiso Sibisi,
CSIR President and CEO



The CSIR Board's recommendation to the Minister of Science and Technology, Mrs Naledi Pandor, to renew the contract of Dr Sibusiso Sibisi as CEO was approved by Cabinet. She said, "I am confident that Dr Sibisi will continue to lead the CSIR over the next five years with the same level of commitment, passion and understanding of national and global scientific challenges."