



COP17

The Durban deal

With the “greatest climate roadshow” happening on our doorstep, will a Durban Deal be reached to secure a greener future for the world? And will Durban impress its guests in a way that tourism gets a much needed boost in years to come? *Business in Durban* takes a close look...

It is difficult to overestimate the impact COP17-CMP7 will have on Durban. “This is the largest conference ever held in Africa,” says city manager Dr Michael Sutcliffe. We will see one city hosting 194 countries, dwarfing by comparison – in terms of direct impact – last year’s FIFA World Cup, which essentially involved nine cities, 10 venues and 32 teams from 32 countries.

While the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol (CMP7) officially starts on November 28 and ends on December 9, “the city needs to be ready a week earlier,” says Sutcliffe.

This is for the pre-session meetings involving the G77 (Group of 77 – the loose coalition of developing nations that had 77 founding members), which comprises 123 countries plus China. During the pre-COP17 week, Sutcliffe says, blocks of G77 members will caucus and refine their positions in preparation for the main event. They will be assigned facilities at the ICC; United Nations representatives involved will convene at the Moses Mabhida Stadium.

For a full three weeks there will be intense media spotlight, including CNN’s *Road to Durban* “green city” series, which began in August; a huge UN-accredited international press contingent; a full quota of South African media; plus many who will arrive unaccredited

to cover events. The city – arguably the most experienced in Africa in terms of hosting major conferences and conventions – has to get things right and plans to get things right, says Sutcliffe.

“Right” in this case involves everything from making sure accommodation needs are met to organising ministerial shuttles that run like clockwork to avoiding major traffic jams. Challenges include treating every country equally whether they send one representative or dozens. “In diplomatic terms, each has one vote no matter how large or small,” says Sutcliffe.

“Right”, to give Durban Chamber CEO Andrew Layman’s take on things, includes both enhancing the city’s green reputation and its tourism potential. “Since members

Smoke emissions the world over must become a thing of the past, according to climate activists

of the global community coming for COP17 will be environmentally sensitive, they need to leave with a sense that Durban as a city is in the vanguard of climate change initiatives. We want to be seen as more attractive than other cities for hosting future environmental conferences and for 'green economy' investment and funding."

And while business tourism is high on the agenda, "we also want COP visitors to return as leisure tourists with their families and friends," says Layman. So getting it right spans a spectrum ranging from security and value for money to hospitality and friendly locals; from quality of service, accommodation and restaurants to entertainment and leisure

options. Based on 25 000 visitors (as an average daily estimate) spending R60-million a day for three weeks, Sutcliffe has suggested R600-million as a conservative guesstimate when it comes to the likely direct financial benefit to Durban of COP17.

Known internationally as a cutting edge green city all the way from our sewage handling to initiatives around creating energy from landfill, many of Durban's COP17 initiatives and legacy projects are focused on the multi-layered and multi-hued greening of the city.

In October the Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre complex (ICC plus Durban Exhibition Centre) was awarded its ISO 14001

certification. "The certification addresses ICC Durban's Environmental Management System and assures that it complies with the rigorous performance standards set by the International Standards Organisation (ISO), a group that sets quality and environmental management standards for businesses," says ICC CEO Julie-May Ellingson.

Describing the internationally recognised certification as the "Rolls Royce of standards," Ellingson said: "It's something we wanted to achieve for COP17 and it made good business sense."

The DEC's facelift in preparation for COP17 adheres to good green practices all the way from sensor taps and the new loo system to the

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COP17 is a conference. Right?

There is a common misconception, most likely caused by the name "The Conference" of the Parties, that the format includes speakers presenting papers around themes.

That's the usual conference format. Right?

"With COP17-CMP7 the term 'conference' only applies in the sense of pulling people into the same space," says Debra Roberts.

In fact, at this conference there are no papers. There are no speakers.

"Essentially, it's a set of negotiations," Roberts says. "Each country (there are 194 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – UNFCCC – member countries) sends their negotiating teams, which vary in size. So there is only one person from Swaziland; the South African team has around 40 in the negotiating team (Roberts is one of them); the US negotiating team will be even bigger."

Negotiations take place simultaneously around different issues linked to the two main negotiating tracks (long term co-operative action and the Kyoto protocol) in different rooms. Negotiating teams split up accordingly so that different country representatives are negotiating at the

same time on different topics.

At the end of each day, country team members assemble their separate groups to share what has been achieved and to plan for the following day's negotiations.

Many negotiation sessions are held behind closed doors, and negotiations are monitored by NGO teams who provide daily feedback and analysis. There are also media briefings.

The negotiations extend over the first week and into the second.

During the second week, the politicians arrive to join the negotiators. This is when the high-profile attendees – government representatives – arrive.

Negotiators are essentially looking to forward their agendas and to forge new agreements. The ultimate aim, says Roberts, is to reach some kind of international climate protection policy and action.

"The politicians use what the negotiating teams have achieved to lobby for consensus. It is from agreements reached here that a new international climate protection policy can result. Beyond the negotiations "which you can think of as the core of COP17-CMP7 – the core of the onion" there are the layers, says Roberts.

There are a whole range of official side events registered with the United Nations. Here there could be papers, presentations and lobbying around topics such as biodiversity, food sustainability issues, greenhouse gas emissions. "There is no standard menu," says Roberts. "The content depends on who has applied." Included here would be governmental groups, big corporations and large nonprofits. "A huge number of organisations focusing on a variety of issues."

Then beyond these official accredited groups, there's the non-accredited contingent, which includes civil society representatives – a figure of around 50 000 has been reported – who will be headquartered in the Botanic Gardens area. Plus non-accredited non-profits and non-governmental organisations.



roof. A test project immediately outside the ICC has seen the introduction of solar power to run traffic lights. To reduce plastic in line with good environmental practices worldwide, tap water will be made available for drinking at the ICC during COP17. "Our tap water is top class, tastes good and is safe to drink," says Ellingson. Delegates who want bottled water will have to buy it.

"Durban has tremendous credibility internationally around green issues. We've been well known for our green initiatives going back to 1994 when we stepped back into the international arena," says Dr Debra Roberts, deputy head of the municipality's Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department and an acknowledged international expert on urban environmental issues. Her department will launch a book





during COP17 summarising 50 municipal initiatives and projects linked to climate protection. The intention is “to communicate locally, nationally and internationally that we are a leader in the field.” Vital when the globally competitive city of the future has to be a green city, says Roberts.

On November 30 and December 1, Durban will offer a “learning exchange” to share its climate protection experience with COP17 delegates from the rest of world.

This will be followed by a Durban Government convention focused on adaptation measures. The intended outcome is a formal adaptation pact.

For Roberts one of the biggest legacy benefits of hosting COP17-CMP7 is the opportunity it offers “to help champion the cause of adaptation as a critical need for

Africa, and Africa’s cities particularly. For many years the almost exclusive focus of the international climate change negotiations

“Durban is recognised as probably the most innovative city in Africa in terms of sustainability and adaptation,” says Sutcliffe. But while the city and the municipality are cutting edge, business and the people of Durban have not always kept up

has been mitigation. We need to ensure that adaptation remains high on the international agenda and that appropriate funding is

provided to ensure that development gains made in cities like Durban are not eroded by the negative impacts of climate change.”

In September eThekweni Mayor James Nxumalo, an advocate for climate change mobilisation and action especially in Africa, became the 76th member of the World Mayors Council on Climate Change (WMCCC) when he was inducted by Bonn mayor and Council vice chairman Jürgen Nimptsch.

Nxumalo has emphasised the need for African local governments to make their voices heard at COP17; acknowledges that cities, like Durban, are at the frontline of climate change response; and that adaptation, as a focus, is crucial.

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eThekweni Mayor James Nxumalo

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are critical to African cities in general, and Durban in particular,” says Roberts. “Included here is the urgent need for ecosystem-based adaptation and the development of a ‘climate smart’ green economy that allows us to confront the impacts of climate change in a way that sustainably addresses poverty alleviation.”

Durban’s climate change initiatives include actively involving the greater community – individuals, business, NGOs and Civil Society – in the city’s future well-being. “Everybody can play a part in some way,” says Sue Bannister, Deputy Head, Strategic Projects Unit, eThekweni Municipality.

While COP17-CMP7 is not open to the public and most proceedings will take behind

closed doors, participation will be welcomed at “The People’s Space” – what climate change activist and convener Bryan Ashe describes as “a parallel process primarily aimed at the Civil Society sectors, NGOs and community based groupings from all over the world”. Event headquarters is the University of KwaZulu-Natal Howard College campus.

“We expect between 6 000 and 10 000 people daily from November 26 to December 10, growing to around 30 000 on December 3 for our Global Day of Action,” says Ashe. This will start with a rally at Curries Fountain, chosen “because that is where a lot of the struggle history of Durban started,” says Ashe. Participants will then march to the ICC to hand over memorandums before continuing to



Sylvester Ratlabala, SABS Executive and Julie-May Ellingson, ICC Chief Executive Officer

to make serious commitments to reductions irrespective of where they are in the world. They're not doing that now."

Civil Society groups committed to "The People's Space" project, says Ashe, are working to leave the city with a legacy project. "Ours will be a zero waste event and we plan to establish a zero waste hub with a training facility."

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sustainably," says Sutcliffe.

One of the many advantages of hosting COP17-CMP7, he adds, is that hosting the world's best scientists, climate protection practitioners and NGO representatives will provide the city with an opportunity for a once-in-a-lifetime peer review. "It gets all of us thinking in terms of ecological footprint," he concluded. – *Wanda Hennig*

a venue near the beachfront for a gigantic free concert "with a climate change message".

NGOs can register their "People's Space" events. Business and government representatives are welcome, says Ashe, "but they cannot register to hold events and can participate in panels by invitation only."

"The COP initiative is currently delivering nothing," adds Ashe. "We want to change the mindset around climate change and to start developing a global movement of citizens.

"We want to see people moving away from fossil fuel and nuclear futures. Our consumption patterns need to change. We want to discuss a different world. People have to start making commitments to reduction and a new system of negotiating. Governments need

