

SOUTH AFRICA

1. Position

The government is in the process of formulating policies on the issue of global climate change. To this end the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee for Global Environmental Change was established in 1991 to "co-ordinate the action required for formulating broad national policy and strategy on global environmental change." There are six groups working on local policy and strategy implications. They cover: terrestrial environment (including agriculture, forestry and conservation); water resources and catchments; air quality; energy use; economics, trade technology and tourism; and the marine and coastal environment. The Department of Environmental Affairs is acting as the lead agent with other government departments participating. The task groups will involve a broad spectrum of experts from the public, private and research sectors. The policy formulation initiative is supported by an active programme of scientific research and environmental monitoring.

2. Factors Influencing Decisions

There are two main reasons for the government's interest in global climate change: first is because of the potential vulnerability of South Africa to such change. Much of South Africa is arid and the environment is subject to substantial natural variation. The implications of possible climate change for local industry, agriculture, forestry and marine resources and thus the economy are enormous. The second reason is that there is concern about the environment in general and a desire to play a responsible role regionally and globally in respect of global environmental change.

South Africa is the largest non-OECD hard coal exporter and ranks third in the world. South Africa also has the fourth largest coal reserves in the world. The country is highly dependent on fossil fuels. In 1989, 82 per cent of TPES was coal and a further 14.5 per cent was petroleum. In order to reduce reliance on imports, coal is used as a feedstock to produce synthetic oil. In the mid-1980s, it was the world leader in using synthetic fuel technology.