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Shiselweni has least forest fires

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CHAIRPERSON of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment Senate Portfolio Committee Nozibele Bujela has warned residents of the Shiselweni II Inkhundla to treasure the forestry plantations that neighbour their homesteads.

Speaking during the International Day for Biological Diversity held at the inkhundla on Saturday, Senator Bujela further congratulated the region for being named as one with the least forest fires in the country, saying timber played a very important role in employment creation and bolstering the economy of the country.

"I come from the northern Hhohho region, where forest fires have caused untold havoc to the commercial forests there, while also adversely affecting the lives of the people employment wise. I urge you to continue protecting the forests here as they are your source of sustenance," she said. She expressed happiness over the ministry of tourism and environmental affairs' drive to take the commemoration of such events to far flung constituency centres, saying it was the best way to educate the people about issues of climate change and global warming.

"The fact that we see cabinet ministers from both tourism and health shows the importance of the commemoration as both issues are closely intertwined.

"Trees also provide some of the medicines we need to treat a number of ailments. This shows that without them there can be little or no life at all. So it is important to ensure that trees are protected so as to ensure longevity amongst the human race," she said.

On the other hand, UNDP Representative, Sthembiso Hlatshwayo mentioned that in 2010, her organisation found that forestry could help assist Swaziland achieve some of its Millennium Development Goals, (MDGs).

MDG No 7 stresses the importance of ensuring environmental sustainability, while trees have been proved to be an important carbon sink in that they absorb the carbon dioxide we breathe out. Carbon dioxide has also been proved to be the main contributor to the depletion of the ozone layer thus exacerbating climate change and global warming. Hlatshwayo continued that the region also topped the country in a survey to ascertain regions that strived for the achievement of MDG No 1, which talks about the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

"In a study a few years ago, the region came out tops having reduced its poverty rate from 69 to 63 percent, and the current levels stand at 59 percent.

This clearly shows that the Shiselweni people are doing something special which the other regions are not doing," she said.

She also stressed the role trees played in the ecology and sustenance of mankind while also praising the region for protecting its forests.

"As a result of unsustainable development, carbon dioxide has blocked the atmosphere for a distance of roughly 30 kilometres above us, which is a shorter distance than travelling to Manzini.

The blockage stops the sun's rays from filtering through the Ozone layer thus creating erratic weather patterns. All this is because of the felling of trees that should be absorbing the carbon dioxide and transforming it into oxygen."

"This is why as the UNDP we encourage and support all climate change sensitisation programmes.

"We are aware that, however small, Swaziland will still bear the dire consequences of climate change and the fact that we contributed less to the problem will not withstand.

Today the seasons have changed drastically while erratic weather patterns are there for all to see. All this shows the severity with which humanity has abused nature and a change in attitudes and practices, however small, will go a long way in correcting this sad scenario," she said.

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