

## REPORT TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT ON THE REVIEW OF A COLLABORATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN SANBI AND THE BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

### RESPONSE:

Rationale behind the amendment of the provisions of a Collaborative Arrangements between SANBI and the Botanical Society of South Africa (BotSoc).

#### (1) **SANBI and BotSoc: A long-standing partnership**

The Botanical Society of South Africa (BotSoc), as a public benefit and non-profit organisation, has been supporting SANBI, its National Botanical Gardens and national plant conservation efforts for 110 years, ever since Kirstenbosch was established in 1913. BotSoc is a long-standing strategic partner of SANBI. As part of the historical agreement BotSoc committed to funding some of SANBI projects including infrastructure maintenance and SANBI's citizen science programme.

Recently, SANBI and BotSoc jointly carried out a review of their relationship and determined that the partnership between them should evolve. Following a previous Memorandum of Understanding (2010) and a Memorandum of Agreement (2014), a joint Collaboration Agreement (CA) between the parties was signed in December 2019. The CA makes provision for a joint review by both parties every two years on the anniversary of the commencement date (December 2019). As part of the formal 2-year review, SANBI and BotSoc engaged in bilateral negotiations to discuss revisions to the Collaboration Agreement in 2021.

Since the partnership was established in 1913, the landscape in South Africa has changed. It became necessary that a critical review of income received from BotSoc and income not realised through free entry granted to BotSoc members, be reconsidered. The rationale for the change in the relationship with BotSoc is to improve SANBI's financial sustainability through a SANBI led model which amongst other includes direct gate takings that support the infrastructure maintenance of not only Kristenbosch but all the Gardens.

Since South Africa's democracy was established in 1994, it has become imperative that existing partnerships be reviewed to ensure alignment with South Africa's democratic principles, Government programmes and initiatives.

#### (2) **Supporting all national botanical gardens**

Both Parties have acknowledged that the model of BotSoc collecting membership fees and facilitating free access by its members to SANBI facilities represent an unsustainable financial arrangement for SANBI and that this arrangement should be reviewed. It must be noted that the delivery of SANBI's legislative mandate on National Gardens requires an integrated and interdependent approach with elements that facilitate garden expansion and a centralised support system.

### **(3) Transformation imperative**

Traditionally, the majority of the Botanical Society's membership is based in the Western Cape and mainly supporting Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. Considering South Africa's social imperatives, it was important that SANBI review the implications of free access to National Botanical Gardens, in particular by members of the Botanical Society of South Africa, who are the only partner who have been granted this benefit. The review is done to promote a fair and equitable access to National Botanical gardens for all South African. An arrangement which gave members of one particular organization free access to the gardens is not equitable and is also unsustainable as such a benefit cannot be extended to all south Africans without compromising the financial sustainability of SANBI.

### **(4) Economic imperatives**

SANBI has the responsibility to prevent proportional losses, or any loss of own income from all potential sources of revenue in order to cover its operational expenses. To ensure equity of access to members of the public and members of the BotSoc, various models were considered when reviewing the free access arrangement. Through bilateral negotiations, SANBI and BotSoc leadership have jointly agreed on revised arrangements that are contained in the updated Collaboration Agreement to achieve mutual objectives and to enable SANBI to deliver on its legal mandate.

### **(5) Conclusion**

The report above highlights the historical, transformation, socio-economic and legal imperatives which are relevant to this matter. SANBI will however continue to review its collaborative arrangements with the Botanical Society of South Africa, as BotSoc remains a key partner for SANBI and its various National Botanical Gardens and programmes.

As part of its recently approved Financial Sustainability Strategy aimed at increasing revenue generation, SANBI will continue to develop and rollout a SANBI membership programme to increase visitor numbers, enhance brand recognition and to also promote biodiversity education and awareness. SANBI envisages launching the new membership programme in 2024.



