Van die Suide na die Noorde
Lê ’n kronkel pad en kreun
Onder die massa verkeer
Wat op die pad se skouers dreun
Die hitte golwe van die son
Wat oor die vlaktes heen spoel
Skroei die plante in hul duisende
En skep ’n hartseer gevoel

Sukkulent Karoo jy's 'n skeppies van bo
Jy het waarde hier op aarde
Sukkulent Karoo jy's 'n skepping van bo

As die son sak in die Weste
Dan is die spesies op hul beste
Want die aand koelte verdryf in die hittegolwe
Die wildbokkies, die koringbesies
Dit is die naguil wat roep
Wat waarsku teen die lugte
Wat kruipe oor die buite

Kyk na die sterre daar bo
Hulle flikker
Kyk na die maan wat skyn oor die vlaktes
Sukkulent Karoo is ’n skepping van bo

In die winter maande verander
Die vlaktes is ’n paradyse
Want daar is vreugde, daar is lewe
En voortplanting in sig

By: George Cloete
Kommagas community farmer
Foreword

"The human community faces the biggest ever challenge in the history of humankind, the struggle against poverty and environmental degradation. Every day the number of choices to save the planet are getting less as man continues to over exploit the global environment. It is the choices we make today that will determine the kind of world our children and grandchildren will live in. The legacy is largely ours to shape."

Quote from Forword of the Second Draft National Action Programme for Land Degradation to Alleviate Poverty.

Increasingly conservation efforts are focusing on preserving the biologically richest yet most threatened places on Earth. Throughout these biodiversity hotspots, human activities are causing the world's terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity to vanish. Species are becoming extinct and pristine landscapes are disappearing at unprecedented rates. Fundamental ecosystem services that are the foundation for human welfare - clean air, fresh water, food and fiber, natural medicines, pollution control and waste disposal, protection from natural disasters, and regulation of disease - are being jeopardised.

Maintaining the range of environmental services that we depend upon necessitates maintaining intact ecological and evolutionary processes at different scales. These services also help maintain energy and infrastructure activities that underpin large-scale economic development; for example, forest cover prevents soil erosion, which leads to siltation that in turn dramatically shortens the lifespan of dams and harbours. The value of these ecological services - at all scales - is tremendous; we are only now beginning to measure how significant and varied they are, and what happens when they are diminished.

The poor within the biodiversity hotspots are the people most reliant on natural resources for food, shelter, medicine, income and employment. If the rural poor draw their livelihoods from a fragile and steadily degrading ecological base, there is no potential for them to lead sustainable lives and livelihoods. Yet the poor are often trapped in a vicious downward spiral: poor people are forced to overuse environmental resources to
survive from day-to-day, which further depletes or degrades the resources they depend upon. This diminishes the plants and animals they need for food, degrades vital water supplies, while increasing their vulnerability to illness and natural disasters.

The Environmental Initiative of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), Africa’s revival plan, identifies urgent actions needed for better management of land, water, and biological resources, as well as for the strengthening of environmental governance and financing.

As we all strive to implement the Millennium Development Goals, including the overarching goal of halving poverty by the year 2015, we have to regularly take stock of our approaches and the impact on both people and their natural environment. Throughout the world, sustainable management of our natural resources is a challenge, particularly in the face of poverty and many other developing needs of our regions. The Succulent Karoo is no different.

The key building blocks of a sustainable future for the Succulent Karoo Biome are people, finance and knowledge working together on an integrated and coordinated approach of partners, both public and private. The Northern Cape Government has engaged with the SKEP programme at the highest level and is a key partner. The programme has been presented to the Premier and Members of the Executive council, where the premier iterated the role of partnering with initiative such as SKEP. Through regular contact our department have been engaged and we fully support this initiative.

Four years ago, the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP) was launched with great optimism of how this arid biodiversity hotspot could be sustainably managed amidst the challenges of global warming and indiscriminate land transformation. Many endorsed the vision of the programme.

“The people of the Succulent Karoo take ownership of and enjoy their unique living landscape in a way that maintains biodiversity and improves livelihoods now and into perpetuity.”

Owen Henderson
SKEP Programme Manager
Vision & Mission

Co-ordination Unit’s Vision

The SKEP Co-ordination Unit aspires to the vision that, ‘by the year 2020 the people of the Succulent Karoo are taking ownership and enjoying their unique living landscape in a way that maintains biodiversity and improves livelihoods now and into perpetuity.’

Co-ordination Unit’s Mission

“We work to connect partners through conservation leadership and a common vision”.

1. Strategically guiding implementers in their action to achieve the SKEP vision
2. Ensuring programme and project accountability
3. Effectively sharing lessons and disseminating of information
4. Facilitating the programmes long-term financial sustainability
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