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SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025

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NATIONAL

MPUMALANGA MUNICIPALITY SLAPPED WITH RECORD R650M PENALTY FOR YEARS OF RAW SEWAGE SPILLS – The Mpumalanga High Court has imposed a landmark R650 million fine on the Emalahleni Local Municipality for years of allowing untreated sewage to contaminate rivers and dams. The case followed extensive investigations after persistent sewage spills into tributaries of the Olifants River, affecting major water sources such as Witbank Dam and Naauwpoort River.

The municipality pleaded guilty to multiple offences under environmental and water laws, including unauthorised waste disposal and failure to comply with directives. The court ordered R500 million of the fine to be ring-fenced for rehabilitating Emalahleni's wastewater systems, with technical and environmental reports due by March 2026 and repairs completed by April 2031.

This ruling signals a strong stance against municipal polluters and sets a precedent for accountability. Experts warn, however, that fines alone will not resolve systemic issues such as poor maintenance, underfunding, skills shortages and weak oversight. Civil society groups are calling for nationwide enforcement, personal liability for negligent officials and full transparency on rehabilitation plans.

Recent research highlights that sewage pollution from failing municipal wastewater plants is a major contributor to South Africa's water crisis, causing ecological damage, health risks and reduced access to safe water. While criminal prosecutions are increasing, experts argue for a combined approach: stronger regulatory frameworks, consistent monitoring and significant investment in infrastructure to prevent future disasters.

Source: <https://mg.co.za/the-green-guardian/2025-11-21-mpumalanga-municipality-slapped-with-record-r650m-penalty-for-years-of-raw-sewage-spills/>

NERSA APPROVES KEY STEPS TOWARD COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET - The National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) has taken three major decisions to advance the country's transition from an Eskom-dominated electricity system to a competitive market. At its meeting held on 27 November 2025, NERSA granted a Market Operator licence to the National Transmission Company South Africa (NTCSA), paving the way for the launch of the South African Wholesale Electricity Market in 2026. It also approved new Grid Capacity Allocation Rules to ensure fair and transparent access to the network and announced the establishment of a 14-member Electricity Market Advisory Forum (EMAF) to guide the transition.

These decisions mark important milestones under the Electricity Regulation Amendment Act, which sets a five-year timeline for creating a fully independent Transmission System Operator. For now, NTCSA, still a subsidiary of Eskom, will act as both market and system operator while managing the grid. NERSA has requested an "independence roadmap" from NTCSA to address potential conflicts of interest arising from Eskom's shareholding.

The new Grid Capacity Allocation Rules aim to prevent inactive projects from reserving capacity and promote efficient use of infrastructure, reducing delays and bottlenecks. Meanwhile, EMAF will provide expert advice on market rules and readiness as South Africa moves toward a competitive electricity market. Further steps, including approval of the Market Code and Market Rules, will be critical to shaping future electricity prices and ensuring fair competition between Eskom and independent power producers.

Source: <https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/nersa-reinforces-shift-to-competitive-electricity-market-as-it-approves-market-operator-licence-and-new-grid-rules-2025-11-27>

G20 SOUTH AFRICA SUMMIT 2025: FINAL OUTCOMES AND GLOBAL IMPACT - The G20 Summit 2025 concluded in Johannesburg, marking a historic milestone as the forum convened on African soil for the first time following the African Union's integration as a permanent member. Hosted under South Africa's presidency theme, Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability, the summit prioritised systemic development challenges over maintaining the global status quo, steering discussions toward poverty, inequality, climate risk, economic cooperation, global health security and institutional reform.

While significant geopolitical differences between Western powers and the expanding BRICS+ alliance persisted, the Johannesburg Declaration reflected a measurable shift toward the priorities of the Global South. Key agreements finalised on the summit's final day encompassed coordinated fiscal and monetary policy responses aimed at addressing inflation without restricting global growth, strengthening the lending capacity of multilateral institutions and adopting a more efficient and equitable sovereign debt restructuring framework to provide accelerated relief for low-income and highly indebted nations. Climate and energy negotiations delivered renewed commitments to the Paris Agreement, alongside the launch of the Global Green Transition Fund.

Leaders advanced a Global Health Security Pact to improve pandemic prevention, data transparency, funding for health bodies and equitable vaccine access, emphasising global health as a collective responsibility. Key outcomes for Africa included commitments for infrastructure investment, sustainable agriculture, enhanced digital connectivity and calls for increased African representation in global financial decision-making. The summit highlighted multilateral cooperation as essential for trade resilience, supply chain security and conflict mitigation, showcasing Africa's growing influence in global governance and economic policy.

Source: <https://africa.time.com/g20/g20-south-africa-summit-2025-final-outcomes-and-global-impact/>

INTERNATIONAL

COP30 DELIVERS FRAGILE CLIMATE DEAL AMID GLOBAL DIVISIONS - The UN has warned that the world is still losing the battle against climate change, despite a fragile agreement reached at COP30 in Belém, Brazil. The summit managed to avoid collapse and reaffirmed global climate cooperation, but it fell short on critical goals such as phasing out fossil fuels and ending deforestation. While the final deal signals that the transition to low-emission, climate-resilient development is irreversible, progress remains incremental and far below what science demands. Key outcomes include commitments to triple adaptation funding, establish a Just Transition Mechanism and formally recognise Indigenous peoples' rights and knowledge as part of climate solutions. However, major proposals on fossil fuel phase-out and deforestation were deferred to separate processes outside the UN framework and adaptation finance deadlines were pushed back to 2035, raising concerns among vulnerable communities. The agreement also failed to directly address the role of fossil fuels, a point of deep frustration for many observers. Despite these shortcomings, the summit saw strong civil society engagement, with tens of thousands marching in Belém to demand urgent action. Looking ahead, experts stress that future negotiations must focus not only on phasing out harmful practices but also on unlocking the economic potential of renewable energy and electrification to accelerate the global transition before COP31.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/nov/23/un-warns-world-losing-climate-battle-but-fragile-cop30-deal-keeps-up-the-fight>

CITES COP20 MARKS 50 YEARS OF WILDLIFE TRADE REGULATION - The 20th Conference of the Parties (COP20) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is underway in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from 24 November to 5 December 2025. This milestone meeting celebrates 50 years of CITES and is the first COP hosted in Central Asia. Delegates are reviewing a record 114 agenda items, including 149 working documents and 51 proposals to amend the CITES Appendices, which list species subject to trade controls. Key proposals include expanding protections for marine species such as sharks, rays, sea cucumbers and eels, as well as controversial discussions on reopening trade in ivory and saiga antelope horn.

The meeting will also address a new CITES Strategic Vision aligned with global biodiversity goals, alongside initiatives to improve multilingual accessibility, strengthen capacity-building and enhance benefits for indigenous people and local communities. Other priorities include strategies to reduce demand for illegal wildlife products, regulate trade in medicinal and aromatic plants and mitigate zoonotic disease risks linked to wildlife trade. COP20 represents a critical moment for global conservation efforts, setting the tone for future wildlife trade governance and reinforcing CITES' role in ensuring sustainable, legal and traceable trade.

Source: <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/cites-parties-prepare-to-review-a-record-114-items-at-cop20/>

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For more information contact admin@imbewu.co.za or visit <https://imbewu.co.za/she-electronic-legal-registers/>



4 December 2025- International Cheetah Day Reserves <https://inverdoorn.com/world-cheetah-day-inverdoorn/>

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