



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

9 March 2018

UCT academic joins UN Special Envoy in discussions over uncertain water future

The University of Cape Town's Dr Kevin Winter was part of a team of experts that joined the United Nations (UN) Special Envoy for Climate Action, Mike Bloomberg, on a tour of the Theewaterskloof Dam this week.

As Cape Town faces an extreme drought that has required a massive conservation effort, Bloomberg, in his first undertaking following his appointment on Monday as UN Special Envoy for Climate Action, toured the largest dam supplying water to the Western Cape on Wednesday.

The founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and three-term Mayor of New York City was joined by several prominent environmental and water experts to better understand the scope of the drought and discuss how, given the intensification of extreme weather due to climate change around the globe, cities can accelerate their preparations for an uncertain water future.

The experts who joined Bloomberg included Dr Winter (Lead Researcher, Future Water Institute, UCT); Christine Colvin (Freshwater Senior Manager, WWF-South Africa); Peter Flower (Director: Water and Sanitation, City of Cape Town); and Dr Gisela Kaiser (Executive Director: Informal Settlements, Water and Waste, City of Cape Town).

Winter said there had been an underlying widely held perception that the onset of climate change would be slow, less erratic and that it would allow more time to prepare for drought.

"In reality, the impact of what we are now experiencing has been rapid, unpredictable and more far-reaching than expected. This coincides with a city that is facing numerous other developmental challenges including access to land, housing, education, health and sanitation services.

"It appeared as if we were capable of overcoming the water supply challenge despite an increase in urbanisation and the limitations of its institutional and financial resources. However, the combination of climate and weather variability has raised new uncertainties that are leaving their mark on the socio-economic development and environmental sustainability of the region," he said.

According to Winter, if the current drought is prolonged further it will stretch this city's resources to the limit and will test the ability of its citizens to adapt to an uncomfortable urban environment characterised by socio-economic and health risks.

"There may be a silver lining somewhere, but as yet it is unclear how the city is going to find the necessary resources to address the severity of a long term future in conditions that are predicted to be more drought-prone, drier and warmer," said Dr Winter.

Bloomberg said: "The extreme drought here in Cape Town should be a wake-up call for all who think that climate change is some far off threat. It's already here, it's making droughts and storms more dangerous, and we've got to do more to keep it from getting worse. Cities and businesses are helping to lead the way, but all levels of society in all countries – on all continents – must take bolder actions. We cannot let droughts like this become common around the world."

Please find photos available for media use [here](#).

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Thami Nkwanyane

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 5672
Fax: (021) 650 3780
Cell: (072) 563 9500
Email: thami.nkwanyane@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za