

from the editor



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The world over, the impact of economic activities on an increasingly unstable natural environment is of paramount concern. As climate change impacts escalate, and resource constraints become more apparent, the business operating environment is also on the verge of dramatic change. The transition to a low-carbon, greener economy is no longer a future prospect; it is happening now. Underpinned by a revolution in clean technology and energy efficiency, the green economy is gaining momentum, with companies across the globe changing the way they do business. The early movers in this post-industrial era will be the global business leaders of the 21st century.

Here in South Africa, in the wake of the Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen, the policy environment is shifting. Government is under pressure to provide the regulatory and tax frameworks that will enable South Africa to deviate from a growth-without-constraints trajectory in order to meet its emissions reduction targets. This has far-reaching implications for South African business.

In this edition, we focus on the emerging green economy and the associated regulatory and operational shifts. Clearly companies face serious challenges in both curtailing their environmental footprints and adapting to a fast-changing operating context. But how seriously is this multi-faceted challenge taken? Are companies engaging with the practicalities of greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation? Is the growing problem of water scarcity on the corporate radar? What are companies actually doing to reduce their environmental impacts?

In an attempt to answer some of these questions, we conducted primary field research with 100 top corporates around the country. Our findings, presented in Chapter Three, suggest that many leading companies are beginning to recognise the gravity of environmental risks and challenges, but this growing consciousness has not yet translated into enough concrete action by the corporate sector as a whole.

A special word of thanks goes to our corporate sponsors whose case studies provide informative examples of environmental management practice. I would also like to thank our partners: WWF-SA, who co-operated with us in producing this handbook and contributed several articles; Indalo Yethu, who once again have endorsed the publication; and Media Tenor, who conducted the media analysis for Chapter Five.

The handbook team here at Trialogue also deserves special mention. Thank you for your insight, rigour and dedication in producing yet another top-quality publication.

We hope this 2nd edition of *The Environmental Handbook* will prompt further corporate action and deepen the debate on the most critical issues of our time. As the global economy shifts, and corporate cultures transform, we are privileged to be part of creating a resilient new system that values and sustains nature's precious resources.

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