Dialogue explores the plight of environmental refugees

Speakers at the dialogue included Dhesigen Naidoo (WRC), George Kuchio (United Nations Refugee Agency), Dr Harrison Pienaar (CSIR), Dr Inga Jacobs-Mata (CSIR), Dr Brilliant Petja (WRC) and Dr Francois Engelbrecht (CSIR).

On World Refugee Day, 20 June 2017, the Water Research Commission (WRC), with the CSIR, launched a new project at a special dialogue titled, 'Taking stock of the impact of environmental refugees and climate-induced migration in southern Africa'. While Dr Harrison Pienaar of the CSIR Natural Resources and the Environment and Dhesigen Naidoo, CEO of the WRC, sketched the background and importance of the new project, Dr Inga Jacobs-Mata of the CSIR provided insight into the objectives of the research. Then the CSIR's Dr Francois Engelbrecht provided an overview of climate induced migration over southern Africa, followed by Dr George Kuchio of the United Nations Refugee Agency, who provided an international perspective.

Dr Brilliant Petja of the WRC presented opportunities in light of climate change. Dr Shafick Adams of the WRC then provided some closing remarks. The dialogue incorporated a range of different perspectives: governance and law, climate change, land-use, as well as national disaster response and international

aid perspectives to explore the climate change-environmental degradation-migration nexus. From the discussions it became clear that context-specific evidence needs to be improved to better inform policies related to environmental migration.

More efforts should be made to strengthen local research capacity and expertise to improve data at the local level. Understanding the impacts of migration on migrants, on communities of origin and on communities of destination must be improved to better assess whether and how migration can contribute to reducing vulnerability or, on the other hand, to fuelling increased risks. Also read the article on page 12.

The research project , which commenced in April, will run until 2020.