**PRESS RELEASE**

AECOM highlights its Sustainable Legacies strategy on World Environment Day

**2 June 2021:** Premier infrastructure delivery company [AECOM](http://www.aecom.com) celebrates World Environment Day on Saturday 5 June with a significant feather in its cap, having being ranked #1 in Engineering News Record’s (ENR’s) 2020 Top 200 Environmental Firms. This marked the fifth year in a row that AECOM topped the global rankings.

The AECOM environmental team in Africa consists of a group of dedicated environmental scientists, social scientists and climate-change advisors. It provides services to both internal and external clients, addressing the need for environmental and social impact assessments (ESIAs) to meet international funder requirements; waste, water and air emissions licences; compliance monitoring and auditing; sustainability and climate change assessments; and stakeholder engagement, integrated environmental planning and environmental advisory services throughout South Africa, Africa and the Middle East.

AECOM’s sustained top ENR ranking “essentially is validation of how we define value in the context of the environment,” comments **Elisabeth Nortje** (Pri.Sci.Nat., Prof. EAP), Market Sector Lead – Environment, Africa. “As a business, it is vital to create a meaningful legacy.” This is particularly important in the context of the environment, which encompasses biophysical, social and ecological factors. The AECOM environmental team engages with clients across various sectors, from power to transportation and water infrastructure to agriculture, mining and master-planning.

In April, AECOM launched its Sustainable Legacies strategy for achieving ambitious environmental, social and governance (ESG) objectives. The strategy integrates four key pillars to embed sustainable development and resilience across the company’s work, improve social outcomes for communities, achieve net-zero carbon emissions and enhance governance.

The main focus of the strategy is Integrated Environmental Management, which is an overarching paradigm that can be applied to a range of industries. “No matter what kind of work we do, on whatever kind of project, we always need to apply ESG principles within that context,” highlights Nortje. AECOM has a detailed ESG risk matrix in place to highlight potential risk factors at the opportunity stage of projects, when these are still in the ‘go’ or ‘no go’ phase.

It is essential that the environmental team is onboard from the very beginning, not only to ensure regulatory compliance, but also to disseminate awareness of the importance of ESG issues. “There is a thread that runs through from planning to decommissioning as to how you bring in the various kinds of environmental specialists throughout that process in order to address local authority and national legislative requirements,” stresses Nortje. “Our involvement is basically a total end-to-end or cradle-to-grave approach.”

The Sustainable Legacies strategy also points to the growing importance of ESG as both a value system and a business imperative. There is an increased scrutiny from both shareholders and the broader public as to what projects and industries a company chooses to become involved with, and the impact that this has on brand awareness and corporate culture. “I think that there has definitely been an awakening or a realisation, both at a corporate and public level, that the current global growth trajectory is unsustainable and needs to be urgently redirected.”

However, complicating the situation in an African context is the need to strike a balance between national development imperatives and ESG goals. “Development initiatives are increasingly necessary in order to create the enabling infrastructure needed for growth and the empowerment of local communities. This is often very different to the requirements of Europe or the US, where topics like energy efficiency and climate-change mitigation are usually at the top of the sustainability agenda,” points out Nortje.

The theme for World Environment Day 2021 is Ecological Restoration, and will see the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Ecosystem restoration means assisting in the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed, as well as conserving the ecosystems that are still intact. Healthier ecosystems with richer biodiversity yield greater benefits such as more fertile soils, bigger yields of timber and fish and larger stores of greenhouse gases.

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**Notes to the editor**

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**About AECOM**

AECOM is the world’s premier infrastructure consulting firm, delivering professional services throughout the project lifecycle – from planning, design and engineering to program and construction management. On projects spanning transportation, buildings, water, energy and the environment, our public- and private-sector clients trust us to solve their most complex challenges. Our teams are driven by a common purpose to deliver a better world through our unrivalled technical expertise and innovation, a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion, and a commitment to environmental, social and governance priorities. AECOM is a Fortune 500 firm and its Professional Services business had revenue of $13.2 billion in fiscal year 2020. See how we deliver what others can only imagine at aecom.com and @AECOM. See how we deliver what others can only imagine at [aecom.com](http://aecom.com/) and [@AECOM](https://twitter.com/AECOM).

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