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Yvette van der Merwe new president of the OIV

Van der Merwe Makes History as First African Woman to Lead the International Organisation of Vine and Wine

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Yvette van der Merwe Becomes First African Woman to Lead OIV

Yvette van der Merwe, an economist with nearly 30 years of experience in South Africa's wine industry, has been elected president of the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), making her the first African woman to lead the organization. Her election took place during the 2024 World Congress of Vine and Wine, held in Dijon, France, from October 14 to 18, 2024. This event also marked the centenary of the OIV and attracted 756 participants from over 40 countries. Throughout the congress, 265 oral scientific presentations, 345 digital posters, and 125 printed posters were showcased. The General Assembly, which concluded the congress, focused on electing new leadership, adopting a strategic plan, and passing 13 key resolutions.

Van der Merwe has been involved with the OIV since 2000 as part of the South African delegation, holding numerous important positions within the organization. From 2022 to 2024, she chaired Commission III on Economics and Law, and prior to that, she served as vice president of the "Law and Consumer Information" expert group from 2013 to 2016 and president of the "Economic Analysis, Markets, and Consumption" expert group from 2016 to 2021. She will now serve a three-year term as OIV president, succeeding Professor Luigi Moio, who will assume the role of vice president.

In addition to van der Merwe's election, new presidents for OIV commissions and subcommissions were chosen. Mario de la Fuente from Spain was elected to lead the Viticulture Commission, Valérie Lempereur from France will chair the Enology Commission, Alberto Ribeiro de Almeida from Portugal will head the Economics and Law Commission, and Angelika Paschke-Kratzin from Germany will lead the Safety and Health Commission. The subcommissions on Analytical Methods and Non-Fermented Products will be led by Fernanda Spinelli from Brazil and Rodrigo Sebastián Espindola from Argentina, respectively.

A significant focus of the General Assembly was the adoption of the OIV's new strategic plan for 2025-2029. This plan prioritizes sustainability, the resilience of viticulture, adapting winemaking to future challenges, supporting all wine-related products, simplifying international trade, and ensuring consumer safety. The complete plan will be published on the OIV's website in the coming weeks.

Among the 13 resolutions adopted, some key decisions included incorporating agroecological principles into viticulture, emphasizing the importance of integrating ecological and social concepts into vine cultivation. Another notable resolution highlighted the significance of viticulture in mountainous and steep regions. The use of fumaric acid for wine acidification was approved, as well as new techniques for determining mineral elements in grape juices using ICP/AES. Additionally, updates to international wine labeling standards were made, covering ingredient and nutritional information.

During the assembly, five OIV Merit Awards were presented to individuals and entities that made significant contributions to the organization. South Africa's Wendy Jonker was recognized for her role as a technical expert and vice president of the OIV's scientific committee. François Rebsamen, mayor of Dijon, was honored for his efforts in relocating the OIV's headquarters from Paris to Dijon. Conrad Briguet, an OIV expert since 2006, received the award for his leadership in the expert group on training, now known as Culture, Education, and Heritage. François Morisson-Couderc was recognized for his company's contributions to global viticulture and his collection of viticulture books, soon to be transferred to the OIV's new headquarters. Finally, the OIV's National Commission in Portugal was commended for its nearly 40-year commitment to promoting active participation in OIV expert groups and commissions.

This congress and assembly mark a pivotal moment for the OIV as it not only celebrates 100 years but also charts a new course under van der Merwe's leadership and the newly adopted strategic plan aimed at addressing global challenges in the wine sector.