

**Vote 34 – Water Affairs and Forestry: Presentation to Budget Hearings**  
**Political Overview by Minister BS Sonjica**  
**31 May 2004**

***New vision***

As we start our third term of government, our second decade of democracy, as government and as a Department, we need to review our vision in the context of the 2014 vision and our 10 Year Review document process. We are also guided by the Millennium Development Goals of the 2002 WSSD, which our government embraced. Most importantly, the President has set out explicit targets in his recent State of the Nation address and these include, I quote:

- “We will ensure that within the next five years, all households would have easy access to clean running water.
- By December this year, through our programmes, we will provide clean and potable water to the 10<sup>th</sup> million South African since 1994.
- During the current year more than 300 000 households will be provided with basic sanitation.”

***Water Resources***

We have a policy that is hailed as the best in the world for the delivery of water in an efficient, equitable manner. We also have developed an Integrated Water Resource Management policy.

The National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS), which is about to be released in 2004, is an important achievement.

However, what remains a challenge is the implementation of these laws and policies so that the imbalances of the past are reversed.

We still have challenges of ensuring that the Water Users' Associations to facilitate an equitable utilisation of water between and among all water users.

We need to support the Water Conservation Campaign and create public awareness around it. This is important given that we sometimes experience drought that leads to restrictions in water usage as well as the fact that we are a water-scarce country. Because of these and other reasons, we need to inculcate a culture of water conservation in our country.

***Water Services***

On water services - in addition to the targets for domestic service, we intend working with the Departments of Health and Education to ensure that the schools and clinics that do not yet have clean potable water are supplied with water tanks as an interim measure. This would help reduce the infection rate from water born diseases.

It becomes therefore important that we improve our capacity to deliver so as to be able to meet or even surpass these targets.

In line with what the President said in his State of the Nation Address about launching the Batho Pele Gateway portal for improving public access to government services, we will have a toll-free line for the public to register their concerns with regards to water services delivery.

***Sanitation***

DWAF inherited a huge backlog in sanitation in peri-urban and rural areas. All these are areas that were under-serviced in the old dispensation. There was no policy and the function for delivering sanitation was shared amongst five departments.

DWAF, together with other departments should be commended for succeeding in the following –

- i. Developing a policy and a strategic framework for the delivery of sanitation
- ii. The establishment of a National Sanitation Task Team (NSTT) to co-ordinate the activities on sanitation among all government departments.
- iii. The development of a successful community-based programme to promote rural sanitation.

However, we still have a huge backlog of 18, 5 million people who do not have access to sanitation service. The Department has therefore decided to make sanitation delivery a priority area for the next five years with an intention to eradicate the backlog by the year 2008 as the President said.

The eradication of the bucket system will top the agenda. This is going to be a big challenge to the Department because the budget allocation for the delivery of water services in line with section 156 of the Constitution, has been given to local government through the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG).

We will therefore be working together with local government and in due course we will be announcing the programme for rolling out the sanitation services.

In many areas where there is no clean water and no sanitation, cholera has regrettably caused deaths. In contrast, in some areas like Klerksdorp/Kanana cholera did not occur because of absence of water supply. There was clean water but only badly managed sanitation. This emphasises the importance of hygiene.

The Wash campaign will have to be strengthened. It will be taken to all schools so that hygiene becomes a national practice.

### ***Forestry***

This programme has been characterised by policy development and restructuring of government's plantation forests.

A number of BEE companies were established through the transfer of ownership benefiting people who were previously workers who are now shareholders.

### ***Challenges:***

A lot still needs to be done to ensure that the BEE companies are developed to self-sustaining companies while we need to ensure that some of the commercial companies meet their obligations.

The Department is dealing with these issues and I am confident that by the time we restructure the remaining forests, we will be ready to deliver much more efficiently.

### ***Transformation of DWAF***

In my assessment, as a new Minister and of course I am still receiving briefings, the Department has made progress in terms of changing the demographics to reflect the character of our society. However it would seem there is still a lot to be done in terms of changing the culture and the environment of the organisation so that the latter is characterised by freedom of expression, mutual respect, commitment and most importantly professionalism.

### ***Restructuring (of the Department)***

The Department will have leaner machinery for regulation and monitoring. We will need to focus on the monitoring and evaluation of our implementation and what impact do our policies have on the programme of improving the lives of the people.

### ***DWAF and BEE policy***

Government is determined to achieve some redistribution of wealth, geographically (between provinces) as well as racially. Restructuring of Forestry Assets, (SINGISI, SINGALALA and others) development of local community resources, (WATER COMMITTEES, WATER USER ASSOCIATIONS) and Expanded Public Works Programme (WORKING FOR WATER, UKUVUKA as well as Water Supply and Sanitation programmes).

It will be important to always ensure that corrupt practices are challenged and exposed. Let us also ensure that the previously excluded people who constitute the majority of the second economy remain the beneficiaries of the BEE policy.

### ***Water for Economic Growth***

The Department is building dams, which constitute the economic infrastructure. The Olifants dam in Limpopo and the Berg River in the Western Cape will unlock the economic potential of those areas that will be served while they will also help deliver water for social benefits. However, we still need to ask ourselves as to what is our contribution in the improvement of the performance of the economy of the country?

### ***Water for Food Security***

We are working with the Department of Agriculture to work out a strategy that will ensure that water contributes to food security.

### ***Free Basic Water Policy***

The Department's policy on Free Basic Water is partially implemented by local government, through only 97% of the municipalities to ensure that the poor have access to 25 litres of water per day. This number will increase as we deliver clean potable water to more South Africans.

### ***International Co-operation***

We have co-operations with a number of countries around the region where we share water courses and these are:

- Limpopo dam – Mozambique, Botswana, South Africa
- Orange River – Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, South Africa
- Lesotho Highlands – a NEPAD flagship
- Komati – Swaziland, Mozambique, South Africa

These co-operations improve our bilateral and multi-lateral relations in the context of the African Union. All countries that are involved mutually benefit while they share the costs for development.

### ***AMCOW***

An African Ministers' Council for Water has been established and it has become a platform for the Ministers of water in the Continent to share experience on all matters relating to water.

### ***Other Departmental Issues***

Finances: The Department needs to continue to improve the management of its finances especially the trading account.

Skills: We need to continue to create skills. The recruitment of interns for training and placement is one effort that we have embarked on as a Department.

EPWP: The Department will ensure that the delivery of water services, the developments in the forestry programme creates jobs for the local communities in the context of the Expanded Public Works Programme.

Labour Issues: There are mechanisms that have been established to deal with such issues and these involve the relevant players. We will continue with this approach as it ensures that the workers' rights are not violated.

Civil Society: There is a platform that brings together the organs of the civil society and the Department to discuss issues of common interests.

THANK YOU.