

**Eastern Cape Water Summit**  
**Speech by Ms BP Sonjica, MP, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry**  
**Regent Hotel, East London**  
**1 October 2005**

**“WATER FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT”**

Premier of the Eastern Cape, Mrs Nosimo Balindlela  
MECs Sam Kwelita and Billy Nel  
Mayors and Councillors from various District and Local Municipalities  
Distinguished guests  
Departmental officials  
Ladies and gentlemen.

**INTRODUCTION**

I salute all of you, the leaders of the water and sanitation sector in the Eastern Cape, both senior planners and politicians, gathered here today. I am glad to be among you once again. The people of the Eastern Cape have a special quality and it is this quality, which I aim to draw on today.

I humbly apologise for not being able to be with you yesterday. I am certain that the first day of the Water Summit proved fruitful even in my absence. I thank you for your understanding of the pressing demands, which resulted in my deployment elsewhere yesterday. I am especially pleased to note that the Premier had to juggle her programme at the last minute to be here with us today.

As a sector, we strive daily to realize the rights enshrined in the Freedom Charter conceived at Kliptown in 1955, these same rights which are reflected in the Constitution, of which every South African has good reason to be immeasurably proud.

We have come a very long way since the dark days of apartheid. The Eastern Cape Water Summit is an opportunity for us to revisit this journey and to remember just how far we have journeyed.

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

To date, we can proudly say that significant progress has already been achieved during the first 10 years of our democracy. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has provided 10,5 million people with water to Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) standard. Through housing and municipal programmes an additional 4,5 million South Africans have access to water, but this access is not necessarily to RDP standards. A total of 3,6 million, or 8% of our population are still without any access to safe water. But this is still 3,6 million people too many.

The record with sanitation is less impressive, but 8,5 million people have been served with basic sanitation, largely through housing and municipal infrastructure programmes. Sanitation remains a major challenge with 16 million people in our country not enjoying access to a safe, healthy and convenient sanitation facility.

Vigilance at every turn of the water and sanitation delivery chain is critical. We cannot afford complacency, but must ensure the proper management of sewage and sewerage treatment works, the good order of water pipes and effective monitoring and intervention, in the case of

any deviation from the benchmarks which ensure the provision of safe water to all and the well being of our people.

I am sure I need not refer in depth to the targets set by the President for the sector. And yet we need to return to this refrain again and again until the freedoms and rights of which we speak are realized for all South Africans equally. I call on your skill and expertise, your leadership and your determination to ensure that this sector meets these targets.

We are on track to deliver safe water to all South Africans by 2008. We need to equally strive to ensure that all South Africans have access to sanitation (by 2010). Today, we have the opportunity to again enter this challenge and to share information and knowledge at the critical planning level so that viable mechanisms, vehicles and processes for the implementation of services are arrived at.

## **WATER SERVICES**

Today, I implore you to openly and honestly interrogate the challenges, which we face in the water and sanitation sectors in the certain knowledge that the solutions to these problems are within our grasp.

I ask of you, that you strive today and on leaving this forum, to ensure that the efforts of our sector contribute meaningfully to the Eastern Cape Growth and Development Strategy. Water is the engine that drives the forces of socio-economic growth.

Municipalities in the Eastern Cape have achieved marked success and there is cause for celebration. The institutional capacity of municipalities within the Eastern Cape is not static, but evolving and consequently your will, spirit of co-operation and collaboration, should carve a proud record of service delivery, which many municipalities in the Eastern Cape have already achieved. It is this legacy which our children will inherit.

Where challenges remain, the solutions to strengthening the institutional capacity of municipalities in the Eastern Cape are equally within our grasp.

Millions of people in the Eastern Cape have received water as a result of your efforts, but there are millions of our people who do not yet have access to safe water. It is imperative that the benchmark for effective, affordable and sustainable water services is realized in full.

Today the Water Summit will address the ways and means by which co-ordination can be improved so that this co-operation realizes its full import and impact for the good in the sector.

Good progress is being achieved among the 19 municipalities who are participating in this programme. We need to be vigilant and evaluate the contribution of the water and sanitation sectors to Project consolidate.

Project Consolidate, is tackling challenges such as:

- The institutional arrangements between Water Services Authorities and Water Services Providers;
- Performance management systems; and
- Billing systems.

We need to honestly interrogate the Section 78 process and come up with viable solutions for improving this process.

We need to evaluate how water service provision is doing in the Eastern Cape and identify the most pressing areas of need, which require support. I look forward to receiving this evaluation and input from you, which will suggest the way forward in addressing these needs.

We also need to come up with creative solutions in respect of informal settlements.

We need to embrace the challenge of the sanitation backlog with full sincerity and commitment ever mindful of the impact on the lives of ordinary South Africans who do not have access to this basic human right.

The original sanitation backlog stood at four million people or 650 000 households in the Eastern Cape. Last year this province succeeded in meeting its target of delivering sanitation to 100 000 households. This year the Eastern Cape will celebrate the achievement of providing sanitation to the one-millionth recipient of sanitation delivery. However, we should not rest until ordinary South Africans have access to this basic human right, which allows for dignity and a quality of life which echoes the essence of our struggle for freedom.

We cannot gloss over the spectra of waterborne diseases. We must find the means to rise to this challenge and counter this threat to the lives and well being of South Africans. My Department will not leave any stone unturned in its determination to prevent the scourge of waterborne diseases.

My Department under the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) allocated more than R50 million in the 2003/04 and 2004/05 financial years to municipalities under the Cholera Intervention Programme. All of us are aware that the provision of water and sanitation services will not stop waterborne diseases in its tracks, however, the role of health and hygiene awareness is also of critical import, in countering water borne diseases.

Among the challenges facing the Water Sector in the Eastern Cape is the eradication of the bucket system. There are 70 000 buckets too many in the Eastern Cape. The days of South Africans suffering the indignity of this inhumane system are being counted down and we will have reason to celebrate when not one bucket is left. In co-operation with the Department of Provincial and Local Government and National Treasury, Government has secured R1,2 billion over the next three years to eliminate the bucket system for good.

## **WATER RESOURCES**

South African legislation, such as the National Water Act of 1998, the National Water Services Act of 1997, are among the best in the international community and some would argue lead this community. The National Water Resource Strategy provides the blueprint for the future of my Department and for the protection, preservation, conservation, development and effective management of our precious water resources.

In so far as water resource issues are concerned, my Department has given much attention in the past year to:

- The possible development of new irrigation schemes for resource poor farmers in the Eastern Cape;
- Searching for solutions for certain towns experiencing water shortages due to droughts and other problems with water resources, e.g. in the Karoo region.
- Water development scenarios in the Umzimvubu River catchment, where there is an abundance of water available for development and a high level of poverty;
- The revision of our policy for subsidies for resource poor farmers to make them more accessible and to streamline their processing; and

- The establishment of Water User Associations (WSAs) and Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) and the restructuring of the entire Department to position itself for its future mandate.

The results of the investigations and work I have just referred to, has been integrated amongst the presentations at this Summit. For this reason, I trust that you applied your minds in deliberations and enriched discussions so as to guide our Department on a way forward by the end of the Summit.

As you may well know, we strive to give the Eastern Cape the appropriate attention owing to the past neglect in many of its areas, and especially its rural areas. To indicate the level of attention given to water resource identification and development, I can cite the following reports that have been produced in the recent past;

- No fewer than eleven major irrigation schemes, covering a total of about 4 400 hectares and involving 960 aspirant irrigators of HDI groups, were investigated at the Department's expense for possible development with subsidies from the Department. Reports were produced on each of the 11 schemes earlier this year and a report is to follow soon for another 3 000 hectare development. Movements are already underway to construct those schemes, which have passed the test to qualify for subsidies from the Department.
- A comprehensive report investigating solutions in the immediate, short and long-term water supplies to 13 towns in the Cacadu, Chris Hani and Pixley Ka Seme District Municipalities was produced a mere week ago. This report also looks into the supply of water from the Orange River Project to these 13 towns. Many possible solutions are put forward, and it will be up to us, the senior water planners and politicians of South Africa, to select the best viable option.
- The third Water Resource Development report, which indicates our commitment to development in the Eastern Cape is one that was produced in mid-2005, concerning possible development of the Umzimvubu River catchment, as well as a look into the possible harnessing of excess Umzimvubu water for use along the Sundays River near Graaff-Reinet, and the Olifants River near Oudtshoorn. This is covered in one of the presentations and I am sure it has invited much interest from you all.
- The finalization of a complete set of what we have called Internal Strategic Perspectives (ISPs) has marked a milestone in the move towards CMA creation. These ISPs not only set out the present water situation in Water Management Areas 12 and 15, but also give all the broad options for possible development and in line with the Provincial Growth and Development plan.

By the end of this Summit, I would like to have a fairly clear picture in my mind as to the way forward regarding water resource development. In searching for this way forward, I want you to particularly take cognizance of the following points. The very points I will now read will give you an indication of the sort of Summit outcomes I am looking for:

- Large areas of the Eastern Cape, and here I refer particularly to the former Bantustans of Transkei and Ciskei, are underdeveloped, and yet have an abundance of water for development.
- Many of the schemes that our Department has recently investigated cannot be motivated by pure economics alone, and we will have to check that the social benefits are sufficient to substantiate subsidization of such schemes.

- Insofar as irrigation schemes for resource poor farmers are concerned, we must not lose sight of the fact that the development of infrastructure is only part of the picture, and that the support and training of those who lack capacity or resources is equally important.
- No major development can be implemented by our Department in isolation, and one must always bear in mind the duties and responsibilities of other involved parties.
- At the same time, we must never lose sight of those who can be detrimentally affected by a major scheme. The relocation of people to make way for a dam, or negative effects on the ecology are but two examples of factors we must bear in mind.
- Any way forward we decide upon must be in line with the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy which the Premier has just alluded to and should be symmetrical with the Integrated Development Plans of municipalities.
- We must also see to it that all new developments are implemented in the spirit of the National Water Act of 1998 and the Water Services Act of 1997. These two documents are essentially the "Bibles" of the water planner, and I impress on you to familiarize yourself with them if not yet so.

## **AFFORESTATION**

The afforestation of an estimated 60 000 hectares of land in the Eastern Cape is an essential part of the Eastern Cape Growth and Development Strategy. This land use option has the potential to contribute R150 million per annum to the Eastern Cape economy with estimated benefits spreading to 120 000 households representing 600 000 people.

The underlying principles of afforestation are:

- Partnership between all spheres of government, as well as the forestry industry;
- Promotion of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE);
- Environmental excellence; and
- Professional management

Among the Benefits:

- Linkage with the global economy;
- Transfer of skills from the 1st to 2nd economy; and
- Key economic driver for the rural economy

On an estimated 60 000 hectare development, the return:

- 3 000 direct jobs in timber growing;
- R150 million per annum revenue;
- 120 000 households impacted or 600 000 people multiplied by four people from the processing and service sectors; and
- R500 million per annum industry.

It is estimated that employment and dividends will benefit and spread to approximately 120 000 households representing 600 000 people. Downstream processing opportunities in sawmilling, furniture manufacture, pole treatment and wood-chip exports will generate a further R0,5 billion in the Eastern Cape per annum.

Afforestation as a preferred land use option will also ensure skill transfers and employment opportunities as part of Government's expanded public works programme, which aims to integrate the formal and informal economies.

The challenge facing the forestry sector of the Eastern Cape is to ensure that this sector opens itself up to the opportunity of Black Economic Empowerment and those of BBBEE. Ownership of this sector cannot remain in the hands of the few if we are to ensure its growth and prosperity. I trust that this summit will come up with a strategic vision for afforestation implementation under the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy.

## **CONCLUSION**

The inputs provided by you, the delegates at this Water Summit, both senior planners and politicians will map the way forward at the level of planning, co-ordination and support for the measurable improvement of service delivery. Your vision will inform the way forward to new heights of service to people where they live so that all may reap the benefits of our hard won freedom.

The vision of water resource management imparted by delegates will map the way forward in this sector and raise to new heights the imperative of ensuring best management practices.

It is the shared expertise, the willingness to co-ordinate effectively and the will to co-operate, which will ensure that the water and sanitation sectors broadly, contribute meaningfully and measurably to the Eastern Cape Growth and Development Strategy.

I call on you to apply your expertise honestly, critically but positively so that we may arrive at solutions which unmask our shortcomings and unlock the full potential of our resources in a balanced way. May we all rise equally to the challenges that confront us to deliver improved and sustained quality water and sanitation service delivery to all our people.

I thank you.