

Flagship projects for Water and Forestry
Speech by Mrs Lindiwe Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
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Vision for DWAF and the sector

Soon after arriving at DWAF I attended the DWAF Lekgotla at that forum I reminded DWAF managers of the priorities for our organisation; then on the occasion of my first 90 days in office, I called a media conference in Pretoria to share with the media my understanding of the challenges facing the Department and my view of the road ahead. I now want to share with you, the DWAF Family, what I see as the way ahead and our flagship projects for the upcoming year.

Firstly the internal flagship projects, most of which I have already spoken to, they are:

1. **A clean audit report during my term of office.** I have made this commitment to the public and to Parliament. I want each one of you, heedless of your rank in the Department, to think about the role that you are going to play to ensure that we receive a clean audit report. With good planning, unreserved commitment and hard work, we will receive a clean audit report indeed. But this is going to require a "business as unusual" approach. An analysis of the Auditor-General's Audit Reports for the financial year 2005/6 shows that apart from lack of financial skills, policies and systems, at the centre of the financial problems of this department is lack of an effective performance management system. For example, the Auditor-General has identified the following as some of the reasons for qualified audit opinions: failure to comply with existing policies; failure to submit reports; lack of proper management frameworks; failure to adhere to certain provisions of the Public Finance Management Act; late submission of documents; inadequate monitoring.
2. **Alignment of the department to address the needs of the sector.** I have already spoken at length on this flagship project and it will be the final phase of our restructuring process; and we will be bringing in external service providers to help us achieve our goals.
3. **Performance management and signing of performance agreements.** It is important to realize that, in order to turn around our financial situation, we must address lack of performance agreements in DWAF, and issue which I have already addressed. The DG and I are leading by example here, and we expect every one of you to respond positively to our marching orders.
4. **Capacity building and skills development.** Our department must, through its work, contribute to the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition of South Africa. We must continue to build a cadre of young people and employees who will address the capacity needs of the Department and also the water and forestry sectors. Our new learning academy will start to formalise our commitments. Our Department must strengthen the partnerships with institutions of higher learning to fast track talent building.
5. **Underspending in the Department.** Last year our department did not spend almost 5% of its budget and a significant amount of funding had to be rolled over to this year. Given the needs that exist in the water and forestry sector we should as far as possible be spending our entire budget. This year despite warnings every month from the acting CFO we are still behind on our spending. Spending requires a commitment from managers and their teams to proper planning and implementation of projects. I have therefore felt it important that we prioritise underspending as a flagship project until our systems are in place and we are using the resources of the department to maximize impact on the sector.

The external flagship projects for the coming year will be:

1. **Empowerment of women.** I have made a personal commitment to ensure that women are firmly in the driving seat in forestry, water and sanitation not only as recipients of basic services, but as empowered owners of their own enterprises in providing goods and services to the sector. I have also made a commitment to support the establishment of an organisation for women in water and sanitation, which would play a role in identifying opportunities for women

and supporting their entry into this sector. We need to have a gender mainstreaming strategy with timeframes.

2. **Improved Governance and the alignment of the DWAF Public Entities.** There is a need to improve DWAF's co-ordination of the institutions that it manages so that we effectively utilise them to better achieve the objectives of DWAF and government. We must scrutinise their business plans and strategic plans to ensure alignment. The Department is driving the process of the establishment of catchment management agencies, and the transfer of forests and water schemes all of which will make a significant impact on the sector. The resources of these institutions must be effectively utilised and we must ensure that they are not going in a different direction. As part of this flagship project we must assess the need to amend our legislation so that it enables us to achieve our goals and create a sector that is dynamic and one that supports the broader vision of government.
3. **Forest Broad-Based BEE Charter.** The Forest Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Charter, which is going to serve as a framework for the transformation of the forestry sector, is on the verge of being concluded. Lots of work has been done by various government departments and the forestry industry through the Steering under the able leadership Ms Gugu Moloi. With Cabinet having approved the revised codes of good practice on 6 December 2006, we can now move fast to conclude the charter and start with implementation. The Charter should be concluded by early next year. As members of the DWAF Family, I expect each one of you to familiarize yourself with the Charter and ask yourself the question: what contribution can I make to ensure the success of the charter. The Forestry Enterprise Development strategy is part of the transformation of the sector and Safcol must also support our transformation efforts.
4. **Meeting the Water and Sanitation targets (and support to Local Government).** The targets of this Government are to eradicate bucket toilets by December 2007, to wipe out the water supply backlog by December 2008 and to provide basic sanitation to all by December 2010. We have to meet these targets. These are not arbitrary targets—because every day a family lives without basic sanitation or water brings risk of ill-health or even death, and undermines their dignity. As you know, women and children are the people most responsible for fetching water, so the need to address their conditions is linked to the whole question of realizing equality and emancipating women. We are well aware of the challenges of lack of capacity and lack of funding. And our strategy must be how we overcome these challenges. We need creative and innovative approaches and we need to build a culture in our Department where people are encouraged to think creatively, innovatively, in ways that will benefit the people of South Africa. I am calling upon each one of you to play your role to ensure that our water and sanitation targets are met. We must ensure that the demeaning bucket toilets in established settlements are eradicated and that all schools and clinics have adequate water and sanitation. As part of this flagship project we will continue to provide support to local government. Regions must be proactive and go to municipalities to see what help they need and what are the real backlog figures, as well as, what their needs are.
5. **Water conservation and water demand management.** Over the past few days I have asked several different groups about whether there is a shortage of water in South Africa. All the evidence points towards our country being water scarce yet the way people behave in their use of water makes one think that we have an abundance of this precious resource. We must find ways to change people's attitude towards water use and encourage water saving. This needs to be done across the water cycle starting from the rivers and streams, all the way through to the storage, cleaning, distribution, and utilisation of water, and ultimately to the treatment of waste water. South African's need to change their behaviour in how they use water and I see DWAF playing a lead role in driving this behaviour change. Already there are many proposals and possible actions that we can take as part of this flagship project I would like to see a coherent plan of action being developed and implemented.

In addition to these five flagship projects, I have identified a further four flagship projects, they are:

6. Water Allocation Reform
7. The establishment of the Water Resource Infrastructure Agency

8. Water quality management, as well as the management and maintenance of this infrastructure;
and
9. Strategic engagement with other African countries on water and forestry issues, in particular the relationships within our region.

While we will be running these flagship projects and receiving reports on them at our quarterly MANCO meetings this does not mean that other work of the department should stop; all the projects we run are important and implementation must continue. Some of these projects are cross cutting and will affect different parts of the department, project leaders will need to be assigned and I look forward to receiving the first reports on these projects by March 2007.

I thank you.