

Handing Over of water tanks to the Kungwini Local Municipality
Speech by Mrs Lindiwe Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Bronkhorstspuit
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Chairperson/Programme Director
Executive Mayors
Members of the Executive Council
Mayors and Councillors
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure and privilege to be with all of you here to see the different spheres of government working together towards improving the lives of our people. Let me start by saying improving the lives of our people in whatever small way, should be the key driving force behind every programme we implement as Government. Local Government then becomes the most important arm of delivery as stipulated by our Constitution and legislation.

The need to ensure that Local Government is supported in order to deliver on the ambitious goals of development as agreed and set by our government is therefore of critical importance.

I would like to confirm that the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is taking this task very seriously. We are committed to supporting municipalities achieve their delivery goals and ensuring that water and sanitation are provided to all citizens of our country in a sustainable way. It is also our responsibility to ensure that such delivery is administered in a responsible manner to ensure that water resources are managed and protected to support our environment and future generations.

It is our mandate to help enable municipalities that are Water Services Authorities to perform their functions properly, and also, ensure that a regulatory framework for service delivery within the Water Sector is provided. This framework is very important for the maintenance of good quality service to communities and also to preserve the long term sustainability of both the infrastructure and our water resources. Our efforts as a Department in this municipal area clearly indicate our willingness and commitment to building a sustainable government institution.

My Department also appreciates the importance of aligning our work with the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy and the Medium Term Strategic Objectives of National Government and the need for this alignment came out very clearly in the Provincial Water Summits we held in the last financial year.

Let me take the opportunity to share with you how my Department, together with other partners are in the spirit of co-operative government, assisting municipalities to achieve goals set out in their Integrated Development Plans.

My Department participated in the initiative to solicit funding for drought relief from National Treasury to increase the capacity and the means to supply water to various areas of this Municipality. This initiative led to an allocation of about R4 million being approved by National Treasury and Department of Provincial and Local Government co-ordinated the transfer of funds to the Kungwini Local Municipality. It has been reported to me that the funding was to be spent on:

- Purchasing tankers for supply of water to rural areas and informal settlements;
- installation of elevated stands and payment for service providers (where applicable), whilst waiting for tankers;
- drilling and equipping existing boreholes ; and
- installation of cables and pipes in some informal settlements to improve access to water for some communities who are without water at different time intervals.

Through this initiative, we recognise it may take some time for us to provide services to all communities, however, because we are a caring Government, wherever possible, we will explore all efforts to provide our communities with some form of service until such time that proper infrastructure is developed. It might not be

apparent to most of us who have such services at our disposal, but it is through such small yet significant efforts that our Government is illustrating its commitment to ensuring a better life for all.

The capacity to deliver on targets within municipalities remains one of our challenges as we strive to address huge backlogs in supply of basic services and reduction of poverty and unemployment. It is a fact that to tackle these challenges, we need the right skills. Our President has on many occasions, raised concern on how the skills shortage in our country impacts negatively on service delivery.

It is for this reason that my Department supports programmes like Project Consolidate that are meant to respond to the skills shortage at municipal level. As a Department, we have actively sought ways to support the Kungwini Municipality in this context and have in the previous year, deployed two engineers to support the municipality on all technical issues in water and sanitation. This support among other things, assisted in the facilitation of the approval of a Business Plan within the Municipal Infrastructure Grant registration process to ensure that implementation of projects is not delayed.

I am told that Kungwini has also benefited from the Siyenza Manje initiative by National Treasury and the Development Bank of Southern Africa, which my Department is also co-funding. This initiative entails the deployment of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE) engineers to assist, resolve and address technical challenges that the municipality is faced with in terms project management and implementation, to ensure that delivery is speeded up.

Apart from the above initiatives, my Department's Gauteng Regional Office has also supported this municipality by providing resources for the development of the Water Services Development Plan, to ensure that there is proper planning of water services and that operation and maintenance of infrastructure is taken care of. I would like to impress upon you as the Municipality there is a great need for all responsible councillors and officials to meaningfully engage in the development of this document so that you can fully appreciate the water service provision challenges and the needs of your communities and then plan accordingly, thereby aligning the Water Services Development Plan with your Integrated Development Plans.

The other critical area for the Municipality is the monitoring of Water Quality. This is important as we not only seek to provide clean and healthy water for consumption; we also have a responsibility to ensure that our water is of good quality. The 2010 World Cup is around the corner, we must make sure that we are prepared for this event in all respects. We should be proud that South Africa is one of a few countries in the World where it is still very safe to drink water from the tap and as a Department, we are very keen to maintain that standard. It is for this reason that we have specifically deployed an official who will assist with the monitoring of the water quality in this Municipality and hopefully build and transfer capacity to the Municipality to perform this important task in-house.

Having said that I would also like to indicate we are aware of the impact the poor state of treatment plants have on the water quality. To ensure that this problem is addressed my Department has invested a lot of time and resources in this Municipality to refurbish oxidation ponds and water treatment works and also to explore building new treatment works. Such initiatives will favour expanding services to industries and increase the opportunity for revenue collection from commercial users and other users who can afford to pay.

Ladies and Gentlemen, meeting the targets which our President announced requires us not only to work harder, but also to be innovative and creative on how we deliver services. To yield better results in service delivery, we are forced to adopt a "business as unusual" approach. We will have to explore how we can creatively utilise the private sector, NGOs, public entities like water boards and communities to speed up service delivery.

As many of you may be aware, one of the challenges we are facing as a Department is to make water available for economic growth and development in support of the ASGISA objectives. Whilst there are initiatives to develop large scale infrastructure to support future economic growth by building dams in the Western Cape and Limpopo; it is my firm belief that we are making a big difference to our fight against poverty and creating a better life for our people by making available facilities such as these water tankers we are handing over today. I would, therefore, encourage municipalities that where possible, such small and yet beneficial initiatives should be looked into. This approach is also in line with the Integrated Water Resource Management Principle, which is advocated as an important approach for fighting poverty in developing countries.

As I conclude, I wish to reiterate our willingness and commitment to continue our engagement with the Kungwini Municipality and all other municipalities all around the country, in order to assist in resolving the challenges and the bottlenecks that hinder the achievement of our goals of ensuring that our people have access to an efficient, good and sustainable water and sanitation services. Support to Local Government is very close to my Department's heart, as it is through working together as all spheres of Government so that we can realise the dreams we have as a country.

We commit ourselves to working even harder and smarter together with other partners to ensure that the "Age of Hope" becomes a reality to all our people.

I thank you.