

Launch of Masibambane III
Speech by Mrs LB Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Gallagher Estate, Midrand, Gauteng
17 March 2008

Ambassador Briet
Members of the Press
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for us as the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) and the Water Sector as a whole to launch Masibambane III today. We have travelled quite a long road with the European Union (EU) and the member countries and today signifies a further strengthening of a long partnership that started 6 years ago when we embarked on the Masibambane I Programme.

To the members of the media I think it is important to note that Masibambane is a programme in which multi-donor pooled funds are included in the DWAF budget. Donors were initially the EU, Netherlands, Ireland and the separately managed DFID programme, which fell under the Masibambane framework. The EU is the largest contributor with €125m over 6 years (2001-2007) in the programme.

Following the successes achieved with the Masibambane I and Masibambane II Programmes, DWAF initiated the process for the development of Masibambane III. DWAF then notified National Treasury of the intention to embark on a Masibambane III Programme by applying for further funding from the European Commission for a 5-year period 2006/2007 to 2011/2012; Masibambane III includes support of €107 million, comprised of €102m for Masibambane for 3 year period and €5m for international technical support.

I am proud to say that Masibambane has won the Public Sector Innovation Award and this is an indication of recognition of the importance of this Programme in supporting the Water Sector. Through Masibambane, DWAF has:

- Contributed to strengthening governance at local level through building sustainable Water Services Authorities.
- Been innovative in bringing Civil Society on board.
- Organized Collaborative Platforms at provincial and national level.
- Placed professionals at municipal level to support local government.
- Driven the agenda of ensuring that cross cutting issues (gender, environment, appropriate technology) are included in service delivery.
- Developed a learning sector through establishing the Water Information Network (WIN) which is located at the Water Research Commission.

Even though there is much that has been achieved through the support provided by Masibambane, a lot still needs to be done.

The problem of access to potable water and decent sanitation remains a huge challenge for South Africa, and affects the poor, particularly women the most. It is our goal that these challenges are addressed. We need to ensure that our children grow in a safe and healthy environment by ensuring provision of decent sanitation in their homes and decent sanitation facilities in schools.

As we press forward with our goal of providing universal access to basic services and meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the support provided by the donor community will be important.

The impact of climate change on rainfall patterns and our water resources will require that we gear ourselves for these changes by having strong institutions and adapting our systems and infrastructure so that we are better able to cope with these changes. DWAF has been going through institutional restructuring for some time and as we enter the final phase of this restructuring we need to take such issues into consideration.

Our restructuring is establishing and rationalizing catchments management agencies and making appropriate institutional arrangements for managing and developing national water resource infrastructure; delegating operation and maintenance for government irrigation water schemes to water user associations; transferring

the management of commercial plantations and indigenous forests to appropriate institutions; establishing the necessary policy and regulatory functions to ensure the sustainable management of all forest resources; transferring department-owned water services schemes and operations to water service authorities (municipalities); and ensuring effective service delivery by competent water services authorities and institutions.

The focus of support for Masibambane III is based on the need to address challenges mentioned above; to support the institutional realignment, build efficient institutions for effective water service provision, and support sustainable water resource management.

As we prepare for Masibambane III we have selected the theme for the third phase of this Programme to be '*Water for growth and development*'. This theme is in recognition of water playing a key role in support of economic growth and social development, as well as, strategic use of water infrastructure as a means to contribute to and stimulate growth and development. This approach ties in with the broader objectives of Government and is in support of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (Asgi-SA). Asgi-SA is tackling economic growth, unemployment and poverty in a more comprehensive and targeted way, and is being driven by the Presidency.

We are also seeing 'Water for Growth and Development' as contributing towards bridging the gap between the first and second economies by bringing marginalized people into the mainstream economy. It is not only having access to clean water and decent sanitation that will contribute to growth and development, but also involving communities in provision of some of the goods and services required by the water sector such as brick making. We also see that through access to water a number of new enterprises and small scale agricultural activities become possible.

Masibambane has also supported DWAF in our engagement with SADC, where we have worked with SADC structures in the development of a five-year strategic plan. To this end, we are implementing the following projects under SADC:

- Best Practice in Water and Sanitation Sector in SADC Region
- Capacity Building of Technicians, Technologists and professionals in Water and Sanitation Sector in SADC Region; and
- Capacity Building of Water Sector NGOs in the SADC Region

We are also in the process of developing a programme of support to extend the Water Information Network to SADC, NEPAD and other partners in the delivering of MDGs in Africa.

In conclusion, an investment in the water sector – particularly in the provision of basic services to people – has a significant return in improved livelihoods and the ability of people to contribute towards economic growth. I am pleased that the EU has recognised this and has committed such substantial resources for the next five years to support us with our goals. I want to emphasize that we place great value in the support and the partnership we have built over the years and we hope the launch of Masibambane III will go a long way to cement this relationship.

I thank you