

The South African Youth Summit
Speech by Ms Rejoice Mabudafhasi, MP,
Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs
Gallagher Estate, Midrand
1 October 2010

Programme Director

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Water and Environmental Affairs: Ms
M Soty

Sponsors

Head Masters and Educators

Learners

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentleman

Introduction and background

I am honoured to be here today to recognise the role of young people in the water resource management and also to acknowledge the winners of the national competitions.

As a mother and grandmother my heart is fulfilled to be amongst these beautiful angels who committed themselves to be water ambassadors at a young age. That gives us hope that our country will be in good hands when they take over from us as they will grow up with values of conserving our natural resources which is the base for the country's growth and development.

I salute the educators for the sterling work they do, they moulded us to be who we are and proceeded to our children. Viva Educators Viva!

Ladies and gentlemen we are gathered here today to celebrate 2nd Youth Summit and also to be educated by the young people on various aspects of water, environment and climate change. They are expecting us to educate the entire nation and the world. These learners are above our level, during our time we didn't know these things it's only when we got to tertiary level when we got exposed to information. Today's event is a culmination of an intensive week-long programme where our youth were engaged in various activities centred around water literacy programmes, innovation and research on water, debates on water conservation and usage, water and hygiene competitions, and water sector career activities.

The Youth Summit is part of the 2020 Vision Programme which is a youth development programme. This programme contributes to the government priorities and it is aimed at creating awareness to the young people about the integrated water resource management in order for them to be water ambassadors and educate their parents and the nation. (***Umbono wethu** ukuthi ingane enye nenye... nabo thisha.... kwesinye nesinye isikolo eNingizum Afrika...Kufanele athole amanzi wokuphuza nokugeza and mfundiso ye climate change wonke amalanga.*) – {isiZulu}

It also strives to address skills development as we all know that water sector is faced with a challenge of ageing workforce, so strategically the department promotes careers in the sector. The 2020 Vision Programme is composed of the following projects:

Baswa-le-Meetse Award: The award particularly target Grade 6 learners through using the art forms of drama, music, poetry, praise singing and poster design. I must commend the extraordinary entries we received from schools across the nine provinces.

Aqua-Enduro Bursary Award: Issues pertaining to drinking water quality form the core business of this programme and the award targets Grades 8 and 11 in order to inspire and encourage them to pursue careers in the water sector and thereby address the skills shortages in the sector.

The South African Youth Water Prize: is designed to empower and stimulate technical and economically viable innovations to save water and other resources. We are proud that this is one of the programmes that has put us on the global stage for some years and has demonstrated that we can stand our ground against other countries.

Invasive Alien Plant Educational Programme Bursary Award: This category focuses on raising awareness about the impact of invasive alien species on our natural resources. The programme allows for activities that seek to transfer content knowledge to learners in a practical manner.

Curriculum-aligned resource materials for Grade R to Grade 9 will be critical to ensuring that water education is introduced in all learning areas and subjects of our school system.

The Youth Summit gives opportunity to learners to engage with water experts to get a better understanding about water related issues, share experiences and get to know each other. We chose to hold the Summit to September as part of the Arbour Month activities. Water and trees are an important part of our life support system – the nature and condition of our trees and our water “mirror” the nature and condition of our people, and act as a barometer of what our future could be.

“We believe that if you educate a child ... you educate a nation ... you secure the future!”

Word of encouragement to the learners

Learners, we will announce and award the national winners, if you did not win don't worry because you are winners from your respective provinces. Life is not about winning but making impact as your projects will bring change to our country and that is what you should be proud of.

Acknowledgement of support

Programme director allow me to acknowledge the role played by key organisations and sponsors in making this Summit possible:

- The Departments of Education and Social Development;
- The Water Research Commission;
- MTN
- BTech Arts students at the Tshwane University of Technology
- Stanza Bopape Women's Group

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to appeal to the learners that when you return to your homes, to your communities and to your schools, let the information you have been exposed to this week make you more vigilant in the field of water wastage:

- close the tap properly after you have washed your hands;
- educate your friends and family about ways of saving water;
- clean and protect your rivers

Educators also teach the learners, such that they may understand the importance of our precious resource "Water" and when they love water they will conserve it

Thank you.