

Signing of the Memorandum of Cross Border Water Supply Agreement

By Ms Buyelwa Sonjica, MP, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs

Between South Africa and Swaziland

23 July 2010

Honourable Minister of Water Affairs of the Kingdom Swaziland, HRH Tsandzile Dlamini

Honourable Premier David Mabuza

Honourable Members of the Provincial Executive Committee

Honourable Members of Parliament and the Provincial Legislature

Executive Mayors and Councilors

Board Members and CEO of the Komati Basin Water Authority

Acting Director General and Head of Department in South Africa and Swaziland, respectively

Chairpersons of the agriculture projects

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this ceremony of the signing of the Cross Border Water Supply Agreement between the Republic of South and the Kingdom of Swaziland. Today's signing is an important milestone in the water sector and is the culmination of more than four years of hard and intensive negotiations by our officials. This process has been preceded by extensive public consultation meetings between by these two countries.

We have come together to celebrate our joint water agreement and to celebrate most importantly service delivery by our governments. We celebrate our progress that we have jointly achieved, people and government working together for the past 17 years. Yes, we have strived over the past 17 years to ensure that through water, a better life for all has been gained, and that through water, we have taken great strides to wash away poverty.

The signing of this Agreement today represents the co-operation that we have built together as people and countries. As we have been told that the next wars will be over water. We hope that the next peace will be initiated by water. Honourable Minister Dlamini, it has been a great honour and privilege to work hand in hand with you. I believe the healthy and collective spirit that bound us together as people which extended to our devoted officials, has made this momentous milestone possible.

But as we celebrate our achievement today, we should never forget the fact that Swaziland and South Africa are indeed, water stressed countries. We do not have a surplus of water and neither can we afford to abuse our precious water resources. A few good thunderstorms or rising dam levels can never be invitations to anybody to waste water or to underestimate its value. Water may be a free gift from heaven, but it can never be cheap.

I am informed that the inputs and comments received from the communities and stakeholders during and after negotiations were considered by the Joint Water Commission and this has led to the production of the Agreement that will be signed here today.

Before concluding, I must acknowledge the support provided by the Joint Water Commission in the negotiation of the Agreement and we look forward to them playing a future role in the implementation of the project.

I would also like to commend everyone involved who has worked in a collaborative fashion on this Agreement, which forms part of our goals of providing the required water services to our people, thereby contributing to the alleviation of poverty and unemployment in our communities.

In conclusion, following today's signing, it is our earnest hope that the implementation of this new agreement will proceed promptly and without contention. This will require from all our officials, dedication, mutual trust, understanding and good faith.

I thank you all for joining us in this ceremony and being witnesses to the signing of the Cross Border Water Supply Agreement. Lastly, thank you Honourable Minister Dlamini, for visiting our country. We say let this spirit prevail in our future interaction.

Enkosi
Ngiyabonga
Thank you.