



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Budget Vote speech for the Departments of Water and Environmental Affairs by the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Minister BEE Molewa, in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP)

23 June 2011

Honourable Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP);

Honourable Deputy Minister, Mme Rejoice Mabudafhasi, MP;

Honourable Chairperson of the Select Committee

Honourable Members of the Select Committee;

Honourable Members of Parliament;

Distinguished Chairpersons and Chief Executives of Public Entities;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

It is a great honour for me to stand here before you to deliver my first Budget Review in the National Council of Provinces as the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs.

I sincerely welcome the opportunity to share with the Honourable Members, the progress made, the challenges ahead and plans for the management of our environmental and water resources and ensure service delivery and to all our people.

Honourable chairperson just a month ago the people of South Africa spoke through the ballot box in the 2011 local government elections, placing their confidence in the ANC government. We will not disappoint them.

It is against this background that I would like to share with you some of the milestones that we have achieved and are working towards.

In the water sector, when the government took office in 1994, a mere 62% of households had access to clean drinking water, today that figure stands at an average of 93%. We are working hard to achieve a 100 percent and will work collaboratively with local government to increase their capacity to deliver quality services to all South Africans. We are aware of the many rural communities who have in many instances been bypassed by our bulk infrastructure which we will attend to through better planning that will help us to close existing water services delivery gaps. We will also have to deal with the challenge of illegal water connections to our infrastructure

Honourable Members, the water sector is a strategic catalyst for job creation and economic development. Virtually all strategic sectors that are drivers for the New Economic Growth Path depend in large measure on the availability of water as a resource, including Mining, Energy, Industrial and Agriculture. Our reconciliation studies of our capacity to meet our water needs tell a story of great challenge in the management of water resources. We will have to respond to the challenge of water availability and provision for economic growth. These include the exploration of our groundwater reserves, desalination of sea water in coastal areas, recycle and reuse approaches, inter-basin transfers and the very important behavioural issue of water

conservation. We cannot afford to waste water, anywhere, anytime in South Africa.

Honourable Members, South Africa's drinking water ranks among the best in the world. There are only a handful of countries globally where one can drink water directly from a tap with confidence, and I am proud to say South Africa is one of those countries. We comply with set World Health Organisation standards and we intend keep it that way. Critical to this effort is increasing the capacity of local government to deliver quality water services to more people. On this score, the following are the most important:

- An integrated approach to water provision to ensure continuous supply from source to tap.
- The refurbishment of wastewater treatment infrastructure including through our Accelerated Community Infrastructure Programme.
- Enhancing water and waste water treatment skills through mandatory training.
- Consistent monitoring by our Emergency Response Facility.
- A targeted Risk-based Regulation system to ensure that all municipalities are informed on risks with tangible targets set for improvements in water planning.
- Strengthening the Blue and Green Drop Certification programme to ensure that local authorities are capacitated on wastewater management.
- In this regard the Blue Drop and Green Drop 2011 reports will soon be released, which will give insight into municipal service delivery of quality drinking water and the state of municipal waste water treatment works.

On water related regulation and transgressions we:

- Continue to increase and strengthen the enforcement capacity of the blue scorpions

- We have increased the issuing of directives against transgressors and successful prosecution of these.
- We have and are further strengthening our verification and validation process in clamping down on water theft and other unlawful activities.
- We have continued with the application of the polluter pays principle without fear or favour.

And finally on our legislative review process:

- We aim to address the negative consequences emanating from the practice of water entitlement by certain sections of our society.
- We will make it possible for the reallocation of water resources to other sectors of the economy, especially those sectors that have been identified as critical in advancing the objectives of the New Growth Path.
- We will also make it possible for the reallocation of water resources to new human settlements across the country.

On water security and security of supply I would like to highlight:

- The exploration of groundwater as further strategic source as well as the increased use of rain water harvesting.
- Training and support for municipalities on ground water management.
- Establishing a National Groundwater Archive and support to municipalities with the implementation of artificial recharge where feasible
- Monitoring groundwater resources especially in the context of extraction, Acid Mine Drainage, trans-boundary aquifers and climate variability.
- Exploring the potential of desalination of sea water with the use of desalination in Bitou Municipal area particularly in Sedgefield, George and Mosselbay.
- In Mpumalanga, we will implement of the Mokolo and Crocodile River (West) water augmentation project, with a total cost of about R2b to

deliver water to Eskom's new Medupi power station and other industries in the area as well as domestic water to the Lephalale local municipality.

- We are constructing the Spring Grove Dam on the Mooi River in Kwa-Zulu Natal, costing R2.2bn and investing R91 million to raise the Hazelmere Dam, to augment the water supply to Umgeni Water.
- In Limpopo, we will construct a water conveyance system from the Vaal Dam to Secunda to augment supply to Eskom power stations and SASOL.
- Added to this there are a number of other water projects around the country including the Water Treatment Works and Bulk Distribution systems from Nandoni Dam in Limpopo; a pipeline from the Flag Boshielo Dam to Mokopane, feasibility studies and designs of the Umzinvubu and Foxwood Dams in Eastern Cape; the Bulk Distribution Pipelines and reticulation networks from the Jozini Dam in KZN; the Groot Letaba Augmentation project, consisting of the raising of the Tzaneen Dam; the finalisation of the plans of the construction of the N'wamitwa Dam and the associated Water Treatment Plants and Bulk Distribution pipelines.
- Plans are well advanced to conclude an agreement with Lesotho for the implementation of the second phase of the Lesotho Highlands water project, to augment supply to Gauteng and the surrounding areas by 2020.

On the water quality side, I am pleased to announce that later this month I will host the 3rd Municipal Water Quality Conference from 27 – 30 June to bring together municipal and water service institutions, our civil society as well as private sector partners to share best practice and expertise towards *"Changing the Landscape of Municipal Water Quality in South Africa"*.

In a broader African context we are currently leading African Ministers Council on Water (or AMCOW) and will leave behind a legacy of a solid well-functional Specialised Technical Committee of the African Union aimed at monitoring and guiding efforts to achieve the water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In the environmental sector, keeping our biodiversity intact is vital to ensure the integrity of ecosystem services such as clean water and clean air. Loss of biodiversity puts our economy and quality of life at risk, and reduces socioeconomic options for future generations.

Sadly we have seen over 50% of our wetland ecosystems been destroyed; over 80 % of our river systems threatened and we are among the world's top 20 greenhouse gas emitting countries.

Our efforts to address these challenges include; environment education and awareness to empower our people to make sustainable livelihoods a reality; catchment rehabilitation; clearing of water consuming invasive alien plants; and rain water harvesting.

The effects of climate change are becoming reality with increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters like tornado's, fires, floods and drought. These impacts can be seen in declining agricultural production, higher food prices and food insecurity; which are most severely felt by the poor.

Honourable Members, the fires in the Western Cape over the past decade have been more prevalent and damaging than ever before; the rooibos farmers in the Western Cape have had to adapt to changes in weather patterns. The communities living along the Limpopo and Orange river basins have experienced massive flooding and disruption to their farming; changes in ocean temperatures and currents have resulted in a southwards shift in some of our fish stocks, including the west coast rock lobster – leaving the West Coast communities stranded in poverty. In this regard, our Climate Change Response Policy White Paper is nearing completion and will outline our vision for effective climate action and a gradual transition to a climate resilient and low-carbon economy and society.

Honourable Members, we must use the fact that South Africa is hosting the United Nations Climate Change conferences in Durban in December this year

to strengthen Africa's voice in the solution of the global climate change crisis, as well as to enhance climate related economic and job creating investment in our country and Africa as a whole. Therefore, we are putting together a Climate Expo as a platform to showcase ourselves and Africa and we are partnering with civil society, provincial and local governments to ensure that we rally all our people behind Team South Africa.

Contrary to widely held belief that our environment management portfolio hinders development, we wish to once more reaffirm that the environment sector is a major contributor to job creation and the fight against poverty.

Every day just over 10 000 people wake up to work at our different parks. Even more people are employed at the various Provincial Parks and the more than 2 000 in private game farms across the country. We have also integrated linked our poverty and job creation Expanded Public Works Programme with our efforts to restore and maintain ecosystems services through programmes such as: Working for Water, Working on Fire, Working for Wetlands as well as Working for Coasts and People for Parks. For example;

- In the 2011/12 financial year, the Working for Water will provide almost 5 million person-days of employment – a substantial increase from the 3 million person-days achieved in the last financial year.
- Our Working for Wetlands programme was able to rehabilitate 427 wetlands and create some 10 000 short term work opportunities for people from vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Honourable Members, we are committed to a sustainable development approach to economic growth, poverty and job creation.

As part of this commitment, we are diligently working towards a comprehensive and balanced approach to the monitoring, evaluation and enforcement of our environmental legislation. For example, we are

extremely concerned at the dramatic increase in rhino poaching by bandits and poachers operating with military precision. To respond to this scourge, we have developed a holistic approach to confront the challenge of rhino poaching, through the mobilization of resources from the various anti-crime units across the country including the defence force, the revenue services and the South African Police Services.

Honourable members, the rhino poaching situation is but an example of the scale of environmental crime occurring in our country. In this regard,

- We have established a Biodiversity Enforcement unit to coordinate and monitor of compliance with our biodiversity legislation.
- We have established partnerships with key security institutions and departments, which continue to yield results.
- We have engaged the Department of Justice to fast track the prosecution of environmental crimes, including the allocation of dedicated times to these cases.
- We are moving towards an integrated permitting system; with integrating waste and Environmental Impact Assessment permitting processes first in line.
- We have put in place a new and improved Environmental Impact Assessment and management regime, which takes a strategic approach to development and dispels the myth that Impact Assessment and Management tools are a barrier to development.
- We have initiated the implementation of the Waste Act, which allows us to address some of the challenges we have been grappling with for decades; including, waste avoidance, minimisation, reuse, recycling, recovery, appropriate licensing, collection and storage requirements as well as environmentally sound treatment and disposal of problematic waste streams.

- In addition, the Waste Act allows us to develop a recycling economic sector, with the municipalities expected to be central. This year we will be setting recycling targets to help us monitor the rate at which we are implementing effective waste management.

The environmental integrity of our country and the need to safeguard our water resources is the responsibility of all of us and we should discharge it with the commitment and zeal that it deserves!

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Deputy Minister and the Directors-General for the Departments of Water Affairs and the Environmental Affairs for the commitment and dedication they continue to show in the execution of our mandate.

I thank you.