



**water affairs**

Department:  
Water Affairs  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI, FROM THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE YOUTH VISION IN MARSEILLE, FRANCE**

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Programme director

Your Excellencies

Participants

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa we would like to thank the conveners of the Youth Vision for the accolades they have bestowed on our country for choosing us to talk to the young people about a topical issue of water management.

This is happening at a time when South Africa is celebrating its National Water Week. This year's Water Week is celebrated under the theme: "*Water is Life – Conserve it, Respect it, Enjoy it*". This message underlines the need to manage this scarce natural resource.

In South Africa, Water Week coincides with the celebration of Human Rights Day on 21 March. Access to water is considered a human right. On 22 March, South Africa will join the rest of the world in celebrating the World Water Day.

It is gratifying to see young people from across the world being in the forefront here at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum.

It is clear that the youth of today are advocating that nothing can be done about them without them, hence the Youth Vision.

It is at this juncture that young people would collaborate to share strategic information pertaining to the global water issues our world is facing today, from access to water for all and everyone to health, food security, energy, economic and population growth as well as climate change. In doing so, young people would be contributing positively to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

It is for this reason that young people should be the vanguards of this precious and finite resource – water! They must conserve and protect it against anything that might threaten it.

"Water is life, without water there will be no life." there will be no development, there will be manifestation of poverty.

We will not be able to address issues of food security, health and economic growth. Hunger and disease will be the order of the day. It is therefore imperative for young people across the world to

constantly engage and share ideas to address the challenges in order to achieve sustainable water resource management. Water is a catalyst for social and economic growth and development.

I call upon young people to commit themselves to be Water Ambassadors who will educate the world about the conservation of our water resources. I call them Water Ambassadors because they play a pivotal role of educating and creating awareness in their homes, schools, churches, clubs and community stakeholders to partner with the water sector in conserving our precious and scarce resource to ensure sustainable water resources for intergenerational equity.

The water sector globally is faced with several challenges including climate variability and change, industrialisation, water quality, unaccounted for water, water availability and accessibility, pollution and ensuring that the international shared waters are clean at all times. No country or continent is immune to the latter challenges. Climate change will also have a drastic impact on the world's water resources hence it should be top priority for the water sector globally.

An increased global temperature will lead to changes in the water cycle that will affect people's livelihoods and development opportunities. Millions of people will face water scarcity, and will have to deal with water hazards including floods, droughts and glacier-melt.

It is of vital importance that young people pursue careers in the water sector. We need hydraulics, scientists, engineers to address the skills gap, this can be achieved by ensuring that water and environmental issues are integrated into the school curriculum.

In conclusion, let us make this 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum the time for solutions and commitments by enhancing representation and involvement of youth in decision and policy making in the areas of sustainable water resources management at all levels.

I thank you.