



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS MRS EDNA MOLEWA AT THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GAZETTING OF THE SECOND DRAFT NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES STRATEGY. Pretoria

Date: 27 August 2012

It gives me enormous pleasure to present to you the draft second National Water Resources strategy of the Department of Water Affairs. We will gazette this very important document this week following cabinet's approval. The second edition of the NWRS is a culmination of a process of wide and extensive consultation by the Department with experts in the water sector, stakeholders both in government and in the private sector.

The Gazetting of the NWRS is followed by a 90-day period during which members of the public will be given an opportunity to add their voices by making inputs and comments with a view to take the management of water in our country to the next level. This process will ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute and moreover, to actively engage the Department to ensure universal ownership of the final strategy. The process will be lead by the Department through a series of national, provincial, sector- and theme based workshops across South Africa.

Details of the various platforms through which comments will be received will be made available to you by my Department. I know there is a website, a postal platform a toll free call in number and so on.

The Strategy is also a requirement in terms of the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998). The first edition, the NWRS-1 was published in 2004 and set out the 'blueprint' for water resources management in the country for the first time.

This NWRS-2 on the other hand sets out the strategic direction for water resources management with particular focus on priorities and objectives for the period 2013-2017. It provides the framework for the protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of water resources, as well as the framework within which water must be managed at catchment level, in defined water management areas.

The NWRS 2 also addresses concerns that the socio-economic growth of South Africa could be restricted if water security, water quality and associated water management issues are not resolved adequately.

It is centred-around the recognition of water as a basic human need, and an understanding of the critical role it plays in ensuring equitable socio-economic development. There are still unfortunately a number of South Africans who do not enjoy water security and lack access to reliable water supplies for domestic and productive purposes. The NWRS-2 recognises the need to address equitable allocation of water resources, which has not as yet been fully realised.

Some of the initiatives that will have to be strengthened to achieve this will include renewing infrastructure, investing in human capabilities, stimulating innovation and technological development, redressing historical inequalities, and increasing participation in the governance and management of water. The challenges that come with issues of climate change in our society and how they might influence current and future strategies also have to be considered.

The draft Strategy as I've already indicated, sets out the strategic direction for water management, it covers all areas of the water business but I will only touch on one or two of these.

Our country is experiencing significant water quality challenges. We have identified the main contributors to deteriorating water quality as being the mining sector, urban development, industries (chemicals, toxins); and agriculture (sediment, nutrients, agro-chemicals, salinity through irrigation return flows). This pollution negatively impacts on the quality of ground water, which at times is the only source of water for communities in some of our rural areas.

In addition, our water ecosystems are not in a healthy state. Of the 223 river ecosystem types, 60% are threatened with 25% of these critically endangered. It is therefore clear that steps must be taken to address issues of Water quality and water quantity and that solutions to these problems are interrelated and need to be addressed as such.

As far as water infrastructure is concerned, major investment in water resources infrastructure has ensured the provision of reliable water supply in large urban areas, in large parts of the rural areas and to commercial water users, and to the economic sectors described above. However a recent study by the Department of Water Affairs indicates that the capital requirement for the entire water sector over the next 10 years, is approximately R670 billion, and that the funding gap is R338 billion over this period.

We have also identified a shortage of appropriate skills and capability in the right places as a critical challenge in the sector, including insufficient engineers, scientists and artisans, as well as adequate leadership, governance and oversight. However we are aware that within the entire water sector including government, the private sector and civil society, there are a wide range of skills that can be harnessed for the implementation of the NWRS-2.

The vision underpinning this National Water Resources Strategy -2 includes that of,

- A democratic, people-centred nation with equitable social and economic development enabled through equitable, sustainable and effective water management;
- Water valued and recognized as a strategic national asset and fulfilling its central role in society and the economy;
- A prosperous society enjoying the benefits of clean water and hygienic sanitation services;
- A healthy, ecologically sustainable and protected water environment;
- A Department of Water Affairs and related water management institutions that serve the public effectively and loyally, meet their responsibilities with integrity, transparency, energy and compassion;

- A committed and dedicated water sector, actively co-operating and contributing towards sustainable water management and associated outcomes.

This vision reflects and builds upon the principles of equity, efficiency and environmental sustainability that underpin the National Water Policy and National Water Act.

I am very pleased, that we have finalised this phase of the process. I want to thank my staff in the Department of Water Affairs and members of the water sector at large that have contributed to the drafting of this document among others.

I thank you.