



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI DURING THE WATER CONSERVATION AND WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT SECTOR AWARDS AT GALLAGHER CONVENTION CENTRE IN MIDRAND, GAUTENG

23 MARCH 2012

Programme Director

Honourable Mayors

Honourable members of the Water and Environmental Affairs Portfolio Committee

Chief Executive Officers of various State Owned Companies and private companies

Senior Managers from Water Affairs and other government departments

Distinguished guests

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening

I would like to express my gratitude for your presence at this auspicious occasion. We are here tonight to recognize, honour and present awards to our water sector partners

and stakeholders who have heeded our clarion call for action for the implementation of **Water Conservation** and **Water Demand Management** programmes in order to conserve our water resources. The Water Conservation and Demand Management awards forms an integral part of an elaborative incentive scheme aimed at facilitating massive uptake and aggressive implementation of Water Conservation programmes. These awards aim to encourage water users to implement water conservation and water demand management principles and bring us a step closer to achieving our vision.

This event is taking place in the month of March. It is in this month that South Africans, young and old celebrate human rights as enshrined in our Constitution. Access to clean water is also a human right.

This year marks the 52th **Anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre**, where innocent civilians were killed by the apartheid state, merely because they were expressing their democratic right to protest against oppression and discrimination.

We are grateful as a country that 52 years later, we can say we have grown and have become a true democratic state whereby citizens have a right to express their dissatisfaction from their government without fear of being victimized. During the month of March, we also celebrate National Water Week under the theme “Water is life, respect it, conserve it and enjoy it” which encourages the citizens of our country to use water responsibly and appreciate it.

Yesterday, I participated during the World Water Day commemoration in Rome, Italy. 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, including South Africa 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.

The water situation in our country has reached a stage where appropriate and timeous interventions are urgently required to avert water deficits and associated impacts on socio economic development and ecosystems.

We call upon stakeholders from all sectors to partner and collaborate in sharing information pertaining to the water conservation and water demand management issues our country 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, all stakeholders would be contributing positively to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's).

The water reconciliation studies which are a management tool to determine the availability of water versus demand and supply recommend that Water Conservation **MUST** be considered as a first priority to bring back water supply system into balance. Given the latter we need to encourage and support the municipalities to provide constant financial and human resources to implement their water conservation plans effectively.

The education and awareness campaigns to educate the citizens of our country about water conservation must be an integral part of water conservation and water demand management programmes. Without water we will not meet the set economic growth targets. This matter is not an academic or intellectual knowledge that resonates with the privileged few. Water conservation must be a daily practice. We need to change the mindset of thinking that water is a gift from God we don't need to save it. When we see

dripping taps and running water on the streets we must be worried and do something about it by reporting to the relevant authorities.

During his state of the nation address the president of the Republic of South Africa reminded us that South Africa is not a Water Rich country and yet we are still losing a lot of water through leaks and poor infrastructure. He also committed that we will be putting measures in place, to reduce our water losses in half by 2014.

Therefore I am delighted to be honouring organizations and individuals who are working together with us in reaching this goal of halving water losses by 2014.

The department has indeed made significant strides by doing everything in its power to deal with water loss challenges and as such have spearheaded the implementation of various Water Conservation and Water Demand Management programmes including the development of a national framework strategy and sectoral strategies to guide the nation on how to turn a vicious water losses situation into a virtuous cycle underpinned by efficient and effective use of water.

The grant funding secured from National Treasury for the Accelerated Community Infrastructure Program will go a long way in ensuring that there is an aggressive implementation of Water Conservation and Water Demand Management and as a matter of urgency, the key focus has been placed on the major demand centres, such as, Metropolitan Councils.

Programme director allow me to outline the adjudication process for the Awards:

The nominees in the four categories of the Water Conservation and Water Demand Management Sector Awards, namely Agriculture, Business, Domestic/Local

Government and Industry, Mining and Power Generation have undergone a stringent and impartial adjudication process. The criteria for adjudication included amongst others, measurable impact / reduction in water wastage, innovation, it must have benefited the people on the ground, sustainability, economic benefit for the organisation / community and skills development.

The Water Sector Awards were advertised on different mediums during the past few months. The nomination procedure was clearly stipulated in the nomination forms as follows: an organisation could be nominated independently or by itself; the information on achievements should be supported by written motivation by at least two people independent from the nominated organisation; supporting documents such as annual reports, water use reduction statistics, etc were necessary.

Conclusion

There is still a tremendous scope of work needed to strengthen government structures at the level of provincial and local government to ensure faster implementation of effective Water Conservation and Water Demand Management programmes.

To this end, the department is working towards establishing a number of structures and strategic forums for constant water sector and stakeholder dialogue, engagements and partnerships to overcome constraints to Water Conservation and Water Demand Management. These will, however, require concerted and co-ordinated action from all spheres, and the support of a wide range of role-players that goes beyond government to include ordinary people, organized business, and professional sector bodies.

Public Private Partnership is critical in ensuring that the water sector overcomes its challenges especially as it relate to water sector infrastructure investment. Together we must continue to conserve our precious water resources. South Africans in their

respective capacities, in the household, industries, mining and agriculture are called upon to use water wisely through efficient and effective implementation of Water Conservation and Water Demand Management programmes.

“Water is life, respect it, conserve it and enjoy it”

I thank you