



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI ON THE OCCASION OF THE MAYORS' DIALOGUE ON WASTE MANAGEMENT, WATER CONSERVATION, WOMEN AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AT EMPEROR'S PALACE, EKURHULENI, GAUTENG

06 AUGUST 2013

Programme Director,

Our host the Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni, CLLR Mondli Gungubele;

All Executive, District and Local Mayors present;

Members of Mayoral Councils;

Municipal Managers;

Deputy Directors-General from the Departments of Water Affairs and Environmental Affairs;

Chief Executive of SALGA;

Officials from all spheres of government;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen

During the delivery of the departments' Budget Vote to the National Council of Provinces earlier this year, I pledged to the nation that we would meet in this forum to encourage all of you to prioritize and champion water conservation, environment, women and youth projects in your respective municipalities. That was a promise made, and it is now a promise kept!

We are gathered today at this mayoral dialogue, which is the first of its kind in South Africa, to promote co-operation and share learning at all levels of government, in order to show commitment to waste management and water conservation. We are

convening under the powerful slogan: to **“Protect Environment and Conserve Water for Socio-Economic Development, Empower Women and Youth”**.

The dialogue also seeks to ensure an integrated approach with programmes and key stakeholders and identify innovations to address challenges and gaps at local government level.

Allow me to take you on a journey of how we, as the sector leaders of water and the environment are geared to bring forth a better life for all, even beyond the second decade of democracy.

Waste Management

The waste sector has been identified as one of the critical sectors, with the potential to contribute substantially to the generation of jobs within the green economy. It is in this light that the Department of Environmental Affairs is increasingly expanding its programmes in job creation and enterprise development programmes within the Waste sector.

As leaders in local government, you are no strangers to the fact that waste management is at the core of service delivery. Therefore it is important that the state improves its capacity to deliver waste services. This is not only to meet service delivery needs, but also to provide dignity and quality of life to our people. South Africa’s democratic government inherited an unequal and inhumane waste management sector, in which services such as town-planning and improvements were prioritised for the minority.

Building much needed capacity in our townships, peri-urban areas and rural areas in the waste sector will go a long way towards beginning to address these historical imbalances.

The Department of Environmental Affairs has conducted numerous studies that have clearly illustrated the capacity constraints that are experienced by you in the Municipalities, in delivering waste services. Municipalities face major challenges with regard to capacity including but not limited to: landfill operations, waste collection planning and administration, separation at source and refuse collection.

Thus an integrated intervention that brings together an increase in capacity levels of Municipalities as well as heightened levels of awareness amongst citizens is overdue.

Youth Jobs in Waste

The capacity gaps in municipalities present an opening for the creation of job opportunities, on-the-job training, continuous up-skilling, as well as enterprise development for the youth. This was launched in the form of the Youth Jobs in Waste programme.

Through Youth Jobs in Waste, an estimated 3 577 jobs will be created by placing young people in Municipalities, who will be serving as:

- *Landfill Site Assistants;*
- *Waste Collection Administrators; and*
- *Environmental Awareness Educators.*

We urge all of you who will be hosting these young people in your municipalities, to welcome them and provide them with the required support, exposure and mentorship they will need.

Further work opportunities will be created from the construction activities associated with the building or erection of landfill site offices, ablution facilities as well as weigh-pad platforms at landfill sites across the country. Young people in each of South Africa's nine provinces will benefit from this programme. The provincial distribution of the jobs is as follows:

- *KwaZulu-Natal - 728, jobs created*
- *Eastern Cape - 566*
- *Western Cape - 366*
- *Limpopo - 350*
- *North West - 326*
- *Northern Cape - 273*
- *Mpumalanga - 262*
- *Free State province, 380*
- *And here in Gauteng – 326 young people will benefit from the programme.*

Water Conservation and Demand Management

As a country we remain one of the thirty driest in the world, with a large part of the west getting drier with time. We are indeed a water scarce country. We are working very hard towards the attainment of one-hundred percent access to water throughout the country, considering also the Millennium Development Goals.

We know that in South Africa we regard water as a basic human right even as it is a basic service. Water indeed is a catalyst towards the social good; it is a catalyst for social and economic development. These are the reasons that drive our efforts towards universal access. We also have to accept however, that in a lot of especially the rural areas where the population is sparse and the topography is challenging, our

delivery is definitely slower than what we would like to see. This also challenges the availability of resources both human and capital.

We are also facing another challenge of water loss. This challenge is articulated through the Non-Revenue Water study by the Water Research Commission. The study highlights a number of critical issues that relate to this “non-revenue water”. I would recommend all municipalities, at least each Municipal Manager, to get a copy of the study; it is quite revealing.

According to the study, the country loses at least 37% of its water through this Non-Revenue Water. We are aware now that Non- Revenue Water is a product of many factors, these include poor planning, limited financial resources to implement the necessary programmes, poor infrastructure, asset maintenance and lack of capacity and water leaks. The water sector can and must be creative and innovative in tackling these challenges of water loss. We also have to remove the silos within which we operate and create the necessary partnerships that will help us to tap into the expertise and resources that as individuals we may not possess.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am quite happy with the mix of audience that we have here. This I say because from what I have just outlined it is clear that what we need is decisiveness and concerted effort to address these issues coupled with strong political will and support to elevate the importance of tackling Non Revenue Water and Water Loss at our respective municipalities. With the political leadership of Mayors and relevant Mayoral Executive Committee members as the patrons for these programmes, a lot can be achieved.

War on Leaks

I have to say that within some of the municipalities where we have been able to do the programmes such as the one I have been driving called the War on Leaks, this has provided us with splendid opportunities to tackle high water leaks through the provision of basic plumbing skills for the unemployed youth to be used as the motive force to conduct water audits, identify leaks and fix them, retrofit inefficient water fixtures, fittings and devices, and finally undertake water conservation advocacy within communities. Through the War on Leaks programme we continue to create employment and skills development for unemployed youth. Local indigent youth are trained and appointed as Water Conservation Warriors to implement the education and awareness programme as well as the retrofitting and leak repair initiative. These Water Warriors undergo basic training on plumbing, water leak repair and other skills training that would help them to develop SMME’s which would service the communities to create more permanent employment.

This programme can be expanded to include simple and basic issues such as locating and cleaning of the infrastructure to counter malaise of poor infrastructure maintenance. Water leaks in both households and schools are unacceptable and this keeps us awake. I wish to reiterate that this needs our collective ideas and strengths.

The Department of Water Affairs has put aside twenty million three hundred and fifty two thousand rands (R20 352 000.00) to implement the War on Leaks pilot project in the nine identified district municipalities namely West Rand, Kenneth Kaunda, Fezile Dabi, Waterberg, Ehlanzeni, Amathole, Central Karoo, Majuba and Pixley ka Seme.

Women Empowerment

Women play a significant role in the preservation of water and the environment, and they are the ones who bear the brunt of its consequences if it is not preserved. We have achieved much in the area of empowering women within our sectors, but there is always more to be done.

The Department of Water Affairs is implementing the Adopt a River project which emanated from the River Health Programme that is aimed at addressing the challenges of pollution of water resources e.g. rivers, wells, pits, dams etc in the country. The targeted participants are unemployed women with female youth constituting a greater percentage.

We have brought rural women on board to prove that natural resources can be managed using indigenous knowledge; it is not only for engineers and scientists.

Through the Adopt a River project, twenty four (24) rivers were cleaned and created 1148 job opportunities for women. Last year I announced that we will put some of these women in our skills development programme to tell a story that says "I was a river cleaner now I am a Scientist". I am proud to report that forty four (44) women will be awarded bursaries in this financial year to study at Universities and FET Colleges.

One hundred and eighty-one (181) women from various municipalities of the Western Cape were trained in plumbing. Two hundred and fourteen women (214) from the nine provinces (9) have been trained as process controllers. Last year we hosted the Women in Environment conference. In this current financial year we will develop the sector gender framework and programme of action.

The Women in Water Awards is an annual programme launched in 2002. It seeks to recognise, congratulate and honour the good work done by women and the vital role they play in the water sector, encourages perseverance in difficult conditions without resources and for communities to learn good practices of water management and change their attitudes for the better.

The awards are presented in four different categories, namely Adopt a River, Water Conservation, Education and Awareness and Community Development. The requirements for projects to be awarded prizes are that they should clearly support the national objectives on water management and they should promote innovative and sustainable solutions to water management and demonstrate greater women's participation and involvement.

Throughout these initiatives and projects, women must be encouraged to share their knowledge, expertise, skills and success stories to increase impact and benefits of those still developing. It must be noted that major sustainable development and economic growth can be possible through improving the economic, social and political status of women.

To all the women, as we observe and commemorate Women's Month, let us follow in the footsteps of the resilient and revolutionary women such as Helen Joseph, Lilian Ngoyi, Bertha Mashaba and thousand others that marched on 9 August 1956. During this time let us spare a thought to the women who are still oppressed economically, socially and politically and strive to lend a helping hand to improve their lives in gaining ultimate freedom that we all supposed to enjoy together, in this beautiful country.

Malibongwe igama lamakhosikazi.

Youth Development

Engaging young people in all aspects of the water and environmental sectors is important because the youth cannot merely be passive beneficiaries but rather need to be effective agents of change who should lead by example and as such employ innovative solutions to complex problems, especially in their areas of abode. One way of doing this I believe would be by supporting the South African Youth Water Sector Policy Strategy once it is finalised. We believe this Strategy will serve as a launch pad for youth engagement. It will eventually spread throughout government, the private sector and civil society. We expect that it will yield enormous social and economic benefits while reducing vulnerability to adverse climate and increase capacity to meet the demands of both growing populations and difficult circumstances.

The approved AMCOW Youth Water and Sanitation Strategy, which was nestled in South Africa and the South African Water Sector Policy Strategy, will provide the youth with increased opportunities for meaningful engagement and respond to the social and economic forces that shape global, regional and national development in the water sector.

The Department of Water Affairs driven and coordinated in and out of school youth programmes play pivotal roles in our municipalities. The involvement of municipalities in the water sector through the current in and out of school initiatives, which respond directly to the Youth Employment Accord, is one series of social compact that is intended to help achieve the New Growth Path goal of five million jobs. As municipalities are the ones that benefit directly from this initiative, it is also an opportunity for active partnering.

The Department of Water Affairs is currently finalizing a consolidated concept on youth programmes.

Scores of young people in South Africa are unemployed, some despite having achieved tertiary education. This is an untenable state of affairs and requires immediate attention by all organs of state as well the private sector.

The Department of Environmental Affairs recently launched two key job creation initiatives for youth, during Environment and Youth Month in June, namely Groen Sebenza and Youth Jobs in Waste.

(Groen Sebenza)

The launch of the R300 million Groen Sebenza Project which is a combination of Afrikaans and isiZulu, translating into “Green Work” in English was led by the South African National Biodiversity Institute. Groen Sebenza promotes major skills development and job creation in the biodiversity sector for 800 unemployed graduates and matriculants. The intake consists of 500 graduates and 300 matriculants.

Think about those numbers once again. Groen Sebenza is not simply providing job opportunities and skills to 800 individuals. It is uplifting and improving, literally thousands of young lives, through the power that lies within unlocking the benefits of the Green Economy. This project is set to have a profound, positive impact on the lives of the families and communities, from which these youngsters originate.

Many of the young people benefitting from this programme, are the sole breadwinners of their extended families. Some are single parents, others have lost their parents or guardians, while others still, have beat the odds stacked against them in their communities, by pooling together what resources they had, to ensure they reached either matric or graduation from a tertiary institution.

However, as we are all aware, the battle against poverty is not won once one gains a qualification from an institution. The challenge within this sector is that students with the right qualifications struggle to bridge the gap between education and employment in the sector. So part of the motivation behind the project was the

realisation that the green economy offers substantial opportunities for job creation and development, particularly in biodiversity and natural resource management.

I appeal to all mayors to commit to ensure that waste management, water conservation and demand management (WCWDM), as well as women and youth development programmes are institutionalised in the business of their municipalities by advocating for inclusion in the strategic and business plans, allocation of financial and human resources, nomination or appointment of champions that will report to the Municipal Manager and Mayor, these should be Mayor's flagship projects.

The success of these programmes is highly dependent on the support and political leadership from our mayors and councillors.

We will converge again next year to check progress on these projects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the signing of the pledge will be a symbolic high level commitment by mayors declaring to be the ambassadors of waste management, water conservation and demand management (WCWDM), as well as women and youth development programmes.

Let us do so with full consciousness and understanding that we shall be binding and committing ourselves to another level of service delivery to South Africans across all strata. Let us do so with a common determination to ensure that we keep our word and be respectful servants.

I wish us all a successful dialogue and that our deliberations will bear the necessary outcomes.

I thank you.