



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE DEPUTY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI, MP, AT THE 2013 WATER CONSERVATION AND WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT SECTOR AWARDS IN GALLAGHER ESTATE, MIDRAND

18 OCTOBER 2013

Programme Director

Honourable Deputy Minister of Health: Dr Gwen Ramokgopa;

Honourable Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources: Mr Godfrey Oliphant;

Honourable Deputy Minister of Science and Technology: Advocate Michael Masutha;

Honourable Member of the Portfolio Committee for Water and Environmental Affairs, MP: Mr JJ Skosana;

Acting Director General: Nthabiseng Fundakubi;

Chairperson of Municipal Infrastructure Services, SALGA: Cllr M Mathikge,

Chief Executive Officers present here;

Top management and staff of the Department of Water Affairs;

Distinguished guests

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Background

I am truly pleased to be associated with this great milestone of the Water Sector Awards on Water Conservation and Water Demand Management.

Prior to 1994 access to clean drinking water was a luxury to the majority of our people.

We have made many strides since the dawn of democracy in delivering water and have changed the lives of our people for the better. Indeed South Africa is a better country today than it was twenty years back.

It is again that time when we get together to recognise, celebrate and reward water users who have implemented exceptional Water Conservation and Water Demand Management projects that tower above the rest.

It is these super stars that make us proud to be associated with the sector and also ensure that the value of water in the public eye never gets diminished.

Water is a natural resource that many of us take for granted, yet many of us still continue to experience hardship in accessing it. Water is indeed the one essential resource we are quick to mourn when it is not present, whether it is for drinking, industrial use, or even when a disaster occurs.

This momentous occasion is taking place at a time when the Department of Water Affairs is engaged in very important initiatives aimed at improving water resource management and regulation in the country.

*Such important initiatives as the **National Water Policy Review** which is aimed at overcoming water challenges of our developmental state to provide for improved access to water, equity, efficiency and sustainability.*

*The other one is the **National Water Resource Strategy-2** which is a statutory requirement that serves as our blue print of survival. This new Strategy is a direct and tangible response to South Africa's vision for 2030 and the priorities set by Government within the National Development Plan (NDP) and National Water Act imperatives that support sustainable development.*

This indicates that it has become a priority for the department and as such all water use sectors are mandated to ensure prioritization and implement interventions to ensure efficient use of our water resources.

Indeed, water must and will continue to play its pivotal role as an enabler of socio-economic growth and development. Both initiatives have been gazetted for public and stakeholder consultation. Let me hasten to plead with you ladies and gentlemen to continue to participate in the process and make your invaluable inputs and contribution. Without your buy in, cooperation and serious commitment, the Department on its own will not be able to succeed.

Water Conservation and Water Use Efficiency are top priorities in all our National Water Resource Planning Strategies. Our future water security and sustainability is only guaranteed when we conserve and preserve the water resources which we have access to today.

*The Chinese proverb which says: “**we only remember the importance of water when the wells run dry**” bears relevance. We are painfully aware that already some parts of our country are experiencing unfortunate water events such as droughts. It is for these reasons that we must continue to be steadfast in implementing Water Conservation measures such as education and awareness campaigns and implement direct and indirect measures to reduce Non Revenue Water and Water Loss.*

Local Government and Water Service Authorities

According to the study conducted by the Water Research Commission, the country loses at least 37% of its water through Non-Revenue Water. This equates to about R7 Billion loss per annum in revenue for municipalities.

The Department is working tirelessly to get the No Drop system into effect to serve as an incentive based regulatory tool to reduce water loss and simplify the management of Non-Revenue Water in the Domestic Sector.

War on Leaks

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.

To that effect, the Department 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..

Mayors Dialogue

Recently the Department hosted the emphatically successful Mayors Dialogue. The aim Mayors Dialogue was to mobilise political leadership across all spheres of government to prioritize and champion water conservation at the respective municipalities, department and provincial governments, promote co-operation and share learning at all levels of government, in order to show commitment to waste management and water conservation.

An action list of priority measures has been drawn up with clear timelines and priorities. To indicate just a few, Mayors will serve as the champions to drive programmes such as War on Leaks in their municipalities, ensure institutionalization of Water Conservation and Water Demand Management in the Municipal business processes.

Provincial Water Conservation and Water Demand Management Forum

We also launched the Kwa-Zulu Natal Provincial Water Conservation Forum at Ndoni Local Municipality in the Howick District Municipality. This forum serves as a strategic channel through which Provincial Water Conservation Programmes are developed and Water Savings targets are set.

All stakeholders such as Local and District Municipalities, Farmers, Industries and Commercial entities come together to share information about Water Conservation and Water Demand Management projects they are implementing. In addition, this forum provides an open and transparent monitoring and evaluation platform through which peers can engage and share information about the latest water saving technology and best practices in water conservation.

Industries, Mining and Power Generation Sector

Working together with the Water Sector Partners in this area, the Strategic Water Partnership Network that we established is already yielding positive results. As an example, Sasol is supporting Water Conservation and Water Demand Management in Emfuleni and Metsimaholo Local Municipalities.

These partnership initiatives amongst others, entail the following activities: to reduce physical losses in prioritised areas, conducting education and awareness in the community and schools with regards to water-conservation issues, and the development of new or support of existing community plumbing entities. The cumulative savings that will be realised through these initiatives are expected to trigger reinvestment in the water-conservation activities. Furthermore, positive results are envisaged with respect to job creation in water-related services especially amongst the youth.

Irrigation Agriculture Sector

The Irrigation Agriculture Sector uses most of the water resources in the country. It makes immense contribution to food security of the country, job creation and

contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of the country especially when you consider the backward and forward linkages of the sector.

One percent water saving in this sector is equivalent to major savings to other sectors especially the domestic sector.

The water management plans that have been developed to support the sector with the implementation of continuous Water Conservation and Water Demand Management measures must be implemented to improve water efficiency and ensure more crops per drop.

This year we received 64 nominees across the four categories namely Agriculture; Industry, Mining & Power; Domestic or Local Government and Business. We congratulate all the nominees, for their efforts have been recognised by their peers.

To those who have emerged victorious, it does not end here, keep the momentum and continue making a difference in water conservation and water demand management.

Conclusion

Let us celebrate together and enjoy the evening with our water users who are superstars for implementing exceptional Water Conservation and Water Use Efficiency Use projects. We need even more actors in this field.

Let me end by reiterating that South Africa is a better country today than it was twenty years back.

“Water is Life, Respect It, Conserve It, enjoy It”!!!!

I thank you all.