

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS,
MRS. BEE MOLEWA, MP, AT THE WATER SESSION
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CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
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CEOs and Captains of Industry

Dignitaries and esteemed guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you here today, to discuss the Strategic Water Partners Network – South Africa, an initiative I announced exactly 2 years ago with the 2030 Water Resources Group.

From the beginning, the vision for this group was to engage all stakeholders, enhance collaboration, and create partnerships in an effort to support South Africa secure its water future and close its projected 17% water gap in 2030.

Two years on, the Strategic Water Partners Network – South Africa (SWPN-SA) is one of South Africa's most innovative public-private-civil society sector partnerships, making progress which would not have been possible without this dynamic partnership.

The dedication SWPN-SA members have shown reflects South Africa's multi-stakeholder understanding of our water challenge and a conviction to resolve this together, making a tangible difference for our people, the economy and the country.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the efforts of the SWPN-SA are integral to the second draft National Water Resources Strategy, which the Department of Water Affairs released in 2012.

A cornerstone of the SWPN-SA is developing innovative that leverages the strength and expertise of the Department of Water Affairs (DWA), the SA private sector, civil society, and expert organizations. By consolidating resources and technical capacity, we can create shared value for all stakeholders. It is through this mentality that this partnership is yielding early and tangible results.

Allow me to offer some examples of the SWPN-SA National Impact Projects.

President Zuma has challenged South Africa to reduce water loss in South Africa by half in 2014. The Department of Water Affairs hence introduced the "War on Leaks Project" which aims to eradicate leaks at household level, educate users about water conservation, fixing leaks, creating jobs for young people and skills development.

Two months ago, we also held a National Water Week where we reiterated the message on the value of water and expanded the War on Leaks programme. The SWPN-SA is also responding to President Zuma's call through one of its projects. Building on the successful Green Drop and Blue Drop programmes, the SWPN-SA is developing the "No Drop" programme, an incentive based system that will assist municipalities to assess and improve their water use efficiency. As part of this package, the network is developing a tool to support municipalities take on the challenge to reduce water leakage in the systems. When rolled out, the research suggests we will be able to save 619 million cubic metres, closing the country's water gap by 3.5% by 2025.

Another strategic intervention to close the water gap, as identified by strategies carried out by my department to reconcile future supply and demand in some major cities and catchments, is the treatment and reuse of water from mining operations. The SWPN-SA is looking at one particular catchment, where estimates show that mine water is expected to contribute 11% in fulfilling future water requirements. Noting this opportunity, the SWPN is working to define institutional and pricing models that would make it worthwhile for government and mines to work together to expand treatment and reuse of mine water to maximise its contribution to closing the water gap. Already one significant step and impact from the SWPN has been its ability to draw all stakeholders together in a constructive dialogue to reach agreement on the key issues that need to be addressed, and options to overcoming them. When rolled out, the research suggests we will be able to supply 52 million cubic metres per year, closing the catchment's water gap by 26%.

Lastly, one of South Africa's largest and oldest irrigation schemes, Vaalharts, has been identified for projects to improve water productivity and foster new small scale farmers. A process of selecting specific areas of engagement is underway and defining a programme to include all relevant social and economic partners in the process. The replication potential of this project across other irrigation schemes is significant.

I would like to acknowledge to the contribution of all the SWPN members who have committed time and resources towards making the SWPN a practical reality. The ongoing support of pioneer companies remains important in the partnership, including pioneer investor South African Breweries – whose initial investment kick-started the SWPN-SA. In 2013, additional investors have made contributions to the SWPN-SA including Anglo American, BHP Billiton, Eskom, Nestle, Sasol, South African Breweries and 2030 Water Resources Group – most of whom represent the initial partners. The NEPAD Business Foundation's role as secretariat has proved important and has facilitated continued dialogue amongst members within the working groups on projects.

I would also like to acknowledge the engagement of my own officials from the Department of Water Affairs.

Looking forward, I would like to see these projects move to implementation. The SWPN-SA has my – and my Department senior leadership’s utmost support and I believe we will achieve our goals – but only if our commitment, efforts, and resolve stay the course.

I will continue to champion the SWPN-SA within South Africa and also to share our experience and learnings with new country partnerships. I invite all of you here today, to also join me in our efforts to close South Africa’s water gap.

I thank you.