



water affairs

Department:  
Water Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
AFFAIRS MRS EDNA MOLEWA ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING  
OF A BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION IN THE FIELD  
OF WATER RESOURCES WITH NETHERLANDS,  
21 NOVEMBER 2013**

***Programme Director***

***Your Excellency Minister Wilma Mansveld***

***His Excellency Ambassador of SA to Poland Mr TLS Pekane***

***His Excellency Ambassador of the Netherlands to Poland Mr PPJ Bekkers***

***Members of the Diplomatic Corps***

***The acting Director-General of Water Affairs***

***Members of the media***

***Ladies and Gentlemen***

*Let me take this opportunity to extend greetings to you Minister Mansveld and express my appreciation for the manner in which both our countries have demonstrated the will to cooperate on issues of water. It has been a difficult task to find a moment like this where we could come together and sign this Agreement. Today will mark a day in history where this relationship was formalised. It is indeed an honour for me to acknowledge your efforts in ensuring that our relationship in the water sector continues to serve the peoples of both our countries.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, the dynamics of water, equity, development and growth are complex and inextricable. I believe and always stress that water resource*

*management lies at the heart of our aspiration to achieve growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. We know that there can be no growth and development without water, so we believe that at the heart of all our planning, financing and governance frameworks must be the recognition of the role of water.*

*South Africa is water scarce, being the 29<sup>th</sup> driest of 193 countries and its rainfall varies dramatically from season to season. In all of this, the limited available water is distributed unevenly across the country. This we must understand within the context of our history.*

*It is also important to note that because the South African economy and its urban settlements developed largely in response to mining opportunities, much of the demand for water comes from inland areas, far from major rivers or other sources of water.*

*The situation in South Africa is typical of that in many other countries. It reflects the growing global understanding that water challenges are about building the capacity of communities and countries to take and implement appropriate decisions regarding their water resources.*

*Managing complex water resources would therefore already be a challenge in a society that is relatively stable from a social and economic point of view. South Africa, however, is a society in rapid change.*

*The physical distribution of people, their social structure and the economic activities in which they engage are all evolving rapidly. Furthermore, the nature of the resource is itself changing in response to the dynamics of a globally changing climate.*

*In these circumstances, the challenge of adapting or aligning the nation to its water resource endowments will be greater than in a less dynamic environment.*

*It is for these reasons that I have mentioned above that we have decided to partner with other countries who have managed to deal with some of the challenges we are currently experiencing in a better way. The Dutch are well known for their water*

*management skills and it is usually said that water is in their genes. The Dutch windmills, dikes and levees form a powerful international image. The Netherlands is fast becoming a water valley for the world. It is a place where international experts meet, ideas come to life, breakthroughs are made, inspiration is found, business is done and partnerships are formed. We could not have asked for better partners than you.*

*I am particularly impressed that in the Netherlands, government ministries, regional and local government bodies, district water boards and drinking water supply companies are all actively involved in water management. The Dutch government has shown its firm commitment to international efforts to ensure water availability and provide protection against flooding. This is demonstrated aptly by your commitment to the establishment of proper institutions to manage water resources.*

*Without dwelling in too much detail, let me also say that I am aware that there is a lot of work that is on-going between our two countries and this clearly demonstrates commitment towards each other. For an example, this cooperation between the Netherlands and South Africa in the field of water is in line and intertwined with relationships existing between South African and Dutch water boards, Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's), water companies and agencies, municipalities, knowledge institutions and businesses.*

*In addition, it is estimated that the total contribution of the Netherlands for water projects in South Africa currently stands at around EUR 60 million and in total these projects generate roughly EUR 180 million of investments in the water sector in South Africa. We expect that in the coming years, Netherlands will maintain its focus on the water sector in South Africa with the aim of increasing its scope.*

*Allow me Minister to share with you some of the work that is currently taking place between our two countries.*

*I know that the Association of the Netherlands Municipalities/Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG) Local Government Capacity Programme (LGCP) in*

*South Africa contributes to our local governments by assisting them to better formulate and implement plans for Local Economic Development. Fifteen (15) municipalities in South Africa have been selected, as well as three (3) Catchment Management Agencies in this venture. The aim is to ensure that the new Catchment Management Agencies will be responsible for the allocation of water and the quality control of waste water being discharged by local governments.*

*The cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities with the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) and the Dutch Association of Regional Water Authorities are running the Local Government Capacity Programme for the period 2012-2016. As part of the Local Government Capacity Programme - South Africa Programme, the DWA, Association of the Netherlands Municipalities International and the Dutch Association of Regional Authorities and all its respective subsidiaries and members have developed a programme called 'Kingfisher', which aims to support all nine (9) Catchment Management Agencies.*

*This partnership is structured along South African requirements to support the on-going institutional changes to improve water resources management. The activities will contribute to improved functioning of these Catchment Management Agencies in their water management and regulatory role and thus providing a basis for Integrated Water Resource Management and sustainable local economic development.*

*The Department also receives support from the Facility for Infrastructure Development (ORIO) of the Government of the Netherlands. ORIO is currently supporting water projects in eThekweni, uMgungundlovu and Elundini Municipalities and we expect that other municipalities will follow.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, in South Africa, we believe that the more we collaborate with other countries on issues of common interest, the more we are able to extend our efforts to a broader scope. When addressing water issues between our two countries, we should also be mindful of continental and global challenges affecting our water resources. In that way, jointly we should develop strategies for necessary interventions.*

*I am saying this Honourable Minister, because as South Africa, we believe that we can only be better in a better continent, thus we strive to ensure that our fellow Africans benefit directly or indirectly from these forms of collaboration. Globally, there are a lot of issues which we could also find common ground in dealing with them, now that is the greatest form of collaboration we seek to carry forward with you.*

*Lastly, I am very grateful that after all the previous attempts to sign this agreement, today we have achieved it. This is a sign of commitment from both our countries and together we shall strive for the successful implementation of this agreement.*

*I Thank You.*