



water affairs

Department:  
Water Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEECH BY MINISTER BEE MOLEWA AT THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN WATER, ENERGY AND FOOD FORUM (SAWEF)  
AWARDS COCKTAIL DINNER 2013, MONTECASINO  
BALLROOM, FOURWAYS, JOHANNESBURG**

**30 JULY 2013**

*Programme Director*

*The Chairperson of Nedbank*

*The Chairperson of Gleason Publishing*

*The Acting Director-General of the Department of Water Affairs and officials from all government Departments and institutions represented here*

*The esteemed Members of the South African Water, Energy and Food Forum*

*Members of the media here present*

*Ladies and gentlemen.*

*I must at the outset state my appreciation for the honour of being invited to this prestigious event that you are hosting today. It is really with the utmost admiration for the work that you do that I believe government must continue to engage and partner with you in the realisation and achievement of your goals.*

*As a people and a country we come from and continue to believe in the basis of engagement, consensus and partnership to not just conquer our demons but to achieve harmony and understanding amongst ourselves. We have a good memory of how after a long period of antagonism and mistrust we decided to come together, warts and all, sit around a table and decide on a common course and direction for our beautiful country.*

*Taking direction from the Pretoria and Groote Schuur Minutes to name a few, we as a people came together through the CODESA process to come to an agreement of what kind of transition we wanted and draw a roadmap which would take us all to the*

*next level of engagement and agreement. We did all this based on the deep-seated love for our country and understanding that together as human beings we could make a great country become a better one.*

*It is against this backdrop that I believe bodies like the South African Water, Energy and Food Forum, set up I am told to look at the connection or nexus formed by the critical components of water and energy towards food security. This is another example of what can and does get achieved by South Africans as and when they put their heads together for a common goal. For this partnership to be at the level of other international bodies shows how the expertise of our fellow South Africans continues to be seen by their colleagues as being truly world-class.*

*We are now a respected part of the family of nations and must be proud of the achievements of our compatriots who continue to raise the bar with their performances.*

*To the members of SAWEF, where officials of the Department also participate, you have to know that my being here means from now on you are going to be in my radar. I will want to know how you proceed within the work of this critical nexus. You are the experts of the work you do. I wish to know as well how you will be grooming those that must take over from you, not in the next century, but rather as you continue on this journey henceforth.*

*The awards that will be handed out tonight I believe are a step towards directing the youth of our country towards careers within this most important sector. Remember nothing in life happens without water. These awards must be used and appreciated for the role they must play, that which reflects the beauty of this sector and the opportunities available within it.*

*As we give these awards out, I believe the recipients will act as ambassadors for the sector as well. The sciences as we know them must play a critical role to educate and inform all of us as to how we need to treat this scarce resource not just for the immediate but definitely for posterity as well.*

*In this stead I must commend the work of Nedbank as a critical partner of and within SAWEF, more so with regard to the award that you are sponsoring. Keep up the good work.*

*Programme Director, let me take this opportunity to indicate to the SAWEF members another partnership within the sector that you may or may not be aware of. Here I am referring to the Strategic Water Partners Network (SWPN). I do not know whether any of you are members thereof as well but I would like to encourage the two bodies to talk together from time to time, share expertise and just ensure the sector continues to grow. The acting DG is the Co-Chair of the SWPN.*

*As a Department, with the help of the broad spectrum of the water sector, we are in the last stages of finalising the National Water Resource Strategy-2. Through this*

*Strategy we are looking to ensure water security on the long term, this being a fundamental pillar of the mandate of the Department.*

*The input from the nation as we did our consultation has been tremendous both in terms of the amount as well as the clarity of thought. We do have an active citizenry and the Department's officials have really been emboldened by the inputs received. We truly believe that the final document will be one of the most inclusive ever to come out of government-public engagement.*

*Ladies and gentlemen, this event being hosted in Gauteng reminds me of one of the issues that have been topical for a good while not just at dinner tables but as well as in the media and the public generally.*

*I am here referring to the issue of Acid Mine Drainage (AMD). I must concede that this is one challenge that has really dug into the resolve of government as well as raised a whole lot of interest in the public space. It is a challenge that has come through as a result of the long period of mining that as a country we have been engaged in.*

*This province is the one that has been most affected by this scourge and therefore been at the forefront of the plan to face-off with it. I am happy to say that the efforts of government and its partners since the decision of cabinet in 2010 to have a focussed approach to AMD are beginning to bear fruit.*

*We have seen a stop to the decant in the Western Basin of AMD contaminated mine water. This has been made possible by the collaboration not just of government and its entities but also interested parties like some of our mining houses and private sector experts. This included access to land, refurbishment of some of the equipment amongst others, but mainly a great deal of co-operation at different levels.*

*We know that in the Central Basin work has started to ensure the necessary pumps are acquired and this in time so that even as the rainy season will be upon us, we must not be found wanting in terms of preparedness. I can assure all of us that the Central Basin will not flood, contrary to all the doomsayers preaching otherwise.*

*In the Eastern Basin, where the environmentally critical level is still way off from being breached, we are also looking to ensure that we prepare ourselves and actually start working towards ensuring that the AMD must and will be adequately treated so as not to threaten the environment in any way.*

*I am also pleased to say that the work towards the finalisation of the long-term resolution of this issue is going full steam ahead. We must and are going to find a resolution for this country that will not be piecemeal but will look at ensuring all aspects of the challenge are dealt with.*

*I am kept up to date with the work by our acting DG who is the Co-Chair of the Inter-Governmental Task team (IGTT) that continues to work on this matter. I have*

*absolute confidence in the work underway. My Cabinet colleagues and I who constitute the Inter-Ministerial Committee tasked with finding resolution of this problem will not abdicate our responsibilities but will ensure that the team of government officials, Team of Experts and partners continue to receive our utmost support. Included in this support is government's willingness to look into the right kind of funding model to ensure the plans that will come out of the long-term feasibility study are sustainable.*

*In true South African fashion we will continue to engage our stakeholders to ensure we have sufficient buy-in into the plans but also ensure we continue the necessary partnerships in this regard.*

*Acting DG, I suggest that as we do have some work on the ground that we can show, the communicators might look at the possibility of a media tour of the three basins shortly to show exactly how far we have come.*

*As I conclude, I know that we are gathered here as well to honour the first Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry of our democratically elected government. This giant of the struggle, who gave up many personal comforts for all of us to be freed together, made a sterling contribution to the work of the first democratic Cabinet within the scope of the work he was given responsibility for.*

*We are grateful that under his stewardship this country took the first steps towards ensuring all South Africans are given the necessary attention with regard to access to potable water and even so as close as possible to their places of abode. Through his efforts this country saw the first National Water Act that we still hold dear today with all the necessary amendments and supporting legislation.*

*As I stated during our DWA Budget Vote this past May, we are in the process of regulatory review. This by no means must be construed to mean that we do not believe in the ideals the esteemed Late Professor Kader Asmal and his team were aspiring to as they put the legislation in place; rather this is to say now that we have come thus far, what else do we need to do and therefore how do we strengthen the legislative framework to be able to achieve the ideals of a truly democratic state with equal liberties for all.*

*As we honour our beloved and revered comrade and leader posthumously today through the efforts of SAWEF, appreciating also the honour by his family to join us in order to receive this award, I'd like to bind us collectively to say to our hero: **thank you so much for being a patriot; one with foresight and a passion for human rights.** We know and will always appreciate all that you have done for this country and us as a people.*

*The ideal of "a better South Africa, a better continent and a better world" was never lost to you. We really appreciate all that you have done for us.*

**I thank you.**

